



REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)

UGC APPROVED JOURNAL NO. 48514

VOLUME - 8 | ISSUE - 9 | JUNE - 2019



GOVERNANCE DURING BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY REGIME IN UTTAR PRADESH: AN AMBEDKARITE PERSPECTIVE

Sudhakara Karakoti

Teaches Political Science at Wollega University, Nekemte, Ethiopia.

ABSTRACT:

The apparent paradoxical matrix of Indian society is explained by the nature of hierarchical social structure, which is based on the complex grid of caste, class, ethnic and gender inequalities. Of these, the glaring caste divisions and inequalities are explicitly manifested in Indian social system. The issue of caste inequalities has been a matter of concern for social revolutionaries, social reformers, academicians, politicians, policy makers, intellectuals and socio-political activists since time immemorial. Given the rigid and closed social system, it is a fact that even after more than seven decades of independence, the position of socially and historically disadvantaged and oppressed sections of Indian society particularly Scheduled Castes has not been changed significantly, as the caste is deeply entrenched in the socio-economic, cultural, psychological and religious lives of people at large. Historically, Scheduled Castes have been subjected to various kinds of exclusion, discrimination, denial and oppression. In social milieu, they were excluded from participating in social and cultural activities. In economic sphere, they were not allowed to gain access to wealth and were condemned to work for socially dominant castes. In the realm of education, they were restricted from acquiring knowledge. In the political arena, they have been marginalized and relegated to the backseat.



KEYWORDS: Indian society, policy makers, intellectuals and socio-political.

INTRODUCTION :

The empowerment of the oppressed sections of Indian society is a highly complex and complicated process involving socio, political and cultural transformation. Of these, the political aspect constitutes the fulcrum of their empowerment. In this context, their emancipation from the oppressive social system hinges upon the extent of political power that they achieve in the

course of their empowerment. In the words of Christophe Jaffrelot, the achievement of political power by the oppressed sections in Northern India especially in Uttar Pradesh is heralded as the silent revolution or democratization of Indian political space and accordingly he anticipated that this metamorphosis would bring about far-reaching implications in socio, political, economic, and cultural milieu of Indian society.¹

In this backdrop, as a case in point, the rise of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh has altered the dynamics of Indian political spectrum on the basis of progressive philosophical foundations of historical icons, i.e., Gautama Buddha, Mahatma Phule, Sahuji Maharaj, Periyar, Narayana Guru, Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram. The BSP government in Uttar Pradesh has pursued the agenda of repositioning and relocating

cultural symbols in Uttar Pradesh. Apart from this, the BSP government has been building an alternative cultural capital by propagating the message of Gautama Buddha and all other historical icons. During its' four tenures, BSP government has been pursuing the naming of various places and policies, installing statues, building memorials and constructing of cultural symbols in memory of great social revolutionaries such as Gautama Buddha, Kabir, Mahatma Phule, Chhatrapati Sahuji Maharaj, Savitribai Phule, Periyar, Narayana Guru, Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram etc. These icons had sacrificed their lives in order to build an egalitarian and humane social order.

The great social movements spanning over a long period of time in Indian history have left behind a rich progressive and intellectual legacy to be carried forward by the succeeding generations of the oppressed sections of this land. These movements have inculcated tremendous amount of social awakening, political consciousness and historical understanding of oppressive and inhuman Indian social system into the psyche of marginalized social groups. All these movements were the products of their own times and had their own limitations. It was an egalitarian and progressive social order that formed the common thread connecting all these historical movements. Every movement is the product of prevailing socio, economic and political conditions of its times. Accordingly, they strive for taking human civilization a step forward in order to create a greater common social good. In this way, these movements are born to create great revolutionary ripples in the social system of a given society. In this process of historical churning, given their strengths and limitations, these movements not only bring about great changes but also leave their humanitarian missions unfinished and incomplete. It is here, the onus of completing the incomplete missions falls on the shoulders of succeeding generations. Incidentally, all these movements starting from Gautama Buddha to Kanshi Ram have fought the rigid, regressive and oppressive social order of the day. Every movement at various phases of Indian history has rendered its own distinct positive contribution to social system. The great radical changes like social awakening and political consciousness have not only democratized but also humanized the regressive obscurantist social landscape of this country. However, the rich legacy of these great historical changes like social awakening and political consciousness can only be sustained and perpetuated with the tool of political power. It is the achievement of political power that serves as a panacea to all the ills afflicting the oppressed sections of the Indian society. As Ambedkar exhorted, political power constitutes the master key to open up all the hither to closed avenues of socio-economic and political system. It was this long cherished dream of achieving political power that was realized by Kanshi Ram through his Bahujan movement. The process of political mobilization by Kanshi Ram and the subsequent storming of oppressed sections into the hither to impregnable bastion of power corridors mark the culmination of historical progressive movements. This political power has been a great emancipator in uplifting the downtrodden and marginalized sections of the society.

It is in this backdrop that the emergence of Bahujan Samaj movement and the subsequent formation of a common political platform should be seen. Accordingly, since its inception, BSP has been a vanguard of Bahujan Samaj movement. With the advent of BSP into the power corridors, the political landscape of this country has undergone a substantial change. BSP through its various policies and programmes has strived for the realization of core values of various progressive social movements. For instance, the project of relocating and repositioning of cultural symbols coupled with the numerous welfare measures reflect the socio-economic and political development of oppressed sections of the Indian society. And, the cultural symbolism has received both bouquets and brickbats equally from its admirers and critics.

The process of cultural symbolism has brought about discernible changes in the attitudes and outlook of Bahujans. To illustrate further, the revival of Buddhism as a part of this cultural symbolism has not only provided an alternative way of life to 'Bahujans' but also paved the way for their socio-cultural empowerment. In this regard, installation of socio, political and cultural symbols in public sphere has given a greater political meaning and a sense of unique cultural identity to the historically impoverished and the oppressed sections of Indian society. In a way, this unique process of creating the cultural symbols has democratized the public spaces. The revival of Buddhist cultural symbols has

become an imperative to the socially marginalized and politically deprived classes in Uttar Pradesh in the sense that this very process has become an effective tool to counter the dominant cultural hegemony of caste Hindus and the brahminical origin of Indian history.

In this backdrop, the BSP regime made Ambedkar Village Development Programme (AVDP) as an integral part of its governance during its four tenures aiming at infrastructural development of the villages. The AVDP has been instrumental in building the capabilities in the villages that have been declared as Ambedkar villages. This flagship programme has been benefiting the villages and there have been substantial changes in the lives of Scheduled Castes after the implementation of AVDP in Uttar Pradesh. The implementation of the programme facilitates access to safe drinking water, primary health facilities; primary education to the children of Scheduled Castes, financial help for the construction of the houses, sanitation, and connectivity of roads to other villages, irrigation facilities/free bore wells, issuing land ownership documents (pattas) etc. In spite of the shortcomings, the AVDP has been playing an instrumental role in building capabilities and there by empowering the oppressed sections in general and Scheduled Castes in particular. It is implied that the BSP regime has just initiated the process of social transformation, i.e., revival of Buddhism, repositioning and relocating cultural symbols in the state, infrastructural development of the state in general and rural development in particular etc. In this regard, the researcher has also made the following observations.

- The emergence of Bahujan Samaj Party has democratized the political space in India.
- The agenda of repositioning and relocating cultural symbols, i.e., identity of revolution or revival of Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh has far-reaching implications in the days to come. This cultural symbolism ushers in great transformation in socio-cultural spheres.
- The reconstruction of cultural symbolism with its egalitarian ideological moorings paves the way for the creation of level playing field in the cultural sphere.
- The assertive identity politics of the oppressed sections of the society during BSP regime combats on exploitation, injustice, and strives for self-respect, dignity, equality and upward social mobility.
- The advent of Bahujans into the power corridors breaks the socio-political monopoly of socially dominant castes. The BSP as an anti-caste movement clamours for participation and representation in the political processes.
- The anti-caste struggles with their progressive ideological moorings enlighten the masses about the inhuman, exploitative nature of Indian social system.
- The Ambedkar Village Development Programme plays a pivotal role in the overall development of the villages coupled with capacity building of people inhabiting in the Ambedkar villages.
- The rule of law replaces jungle raj during Bahujan Samaj Party regime.

Apart from the above major observations, the researcher has also made the following recommendations² to further the development of Uttar Pradesh in general and empowerment of Scheduled Castes in particular.

- In the era of liberalization, privatization and globalization, the growing importance for the English language and English education is inevitable. In such a situation, it becomes an imperative to provide English education to all the sections of society in order to achieve parity and equity. It is recommended to the government of Uttar Pradesh/India that English education should be introduced in all the public educational institutions right from the first standard.
- Each district of Uttar Pradesh must get free residential schools (one in each village panchayat) and colleges (one in each block) with English as medium of instruction.
- Each district of Uttar Pradesh should get free residential vocational, technical and para-medical colleges (at least five in each district) with English as a medium of instruction.
- The provision of scholarships to every student of Scheduled Caste from first standard to PhD in the absence of residential educational facilities.
- The introduction of adult education programmes with a missionary zeal to empower the illiterate masses and also to create awareness about their constitutional and democratic rights.

- The health on wheels based on three-tier system should be strengthened. After identifying the patients at village/block and district level, the mobile medical team should diagnose them and accordingly they should be taken to hospitals through mobile conveyance in case of emergency. Identification of the patients and handover the same to Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and District Medical Health Centres (DMHCs) on the basis of severity of the problem. This kind of mobile medical/health on wheels system is very much successful in Andhra Pradesh (AP) through the '108 service' programme/policy of government of AP.
- In the three-tier system, i.e., village panchayat, block and district level, permanent residential staff along with infrastructural facilities should be provided instead of corporate hospitals.
- Mobile judiciary at block level should be set up in order to reduce SC/ST atrocities and ensure speedy justice to the victims. There should be an adequate share to the Scheduled Castes on the basis of population criteria in the contracts of the government because the public property is the national property.
- There should be a share to the Scheduled Castes on the basis of population criteria in the agreements of natural resources such as mines etc.
- There is a need for strengthening the monitoring mechanism with regard to the implementation of welfare programmes run by the NGOs. There is a need to frame rules and regulations to avoid the misuse of funds in the name of empowerment of marginalized social groups in general and SCs in particular.
- Ensure that each SC family will own cultivable land for socio-economic well-being. The government must pursue all possible measures including the distribution of surplus land, government revenue lands and temple lands within a specific timeframe. If the need be, the government must purchase cultivable land and distribute it among Scheduled Castes. While distributing land to SCs and STs, the ownership of land should be given to female beneficiaries along with bore-well and electricity facilities. These lands should not be purchased and sold to any individual, otherwise, they must be punished/imprisoned for minimum ten years because land is national resource and it should be handed down to the succeeding generations. The same is recommended in the case of housing rights.
- Make laws and enforce them stringently to enable Scheduled Castes to have an equitable share in the appropriation and use of rural and urban property resources.
- There is need to make laws and enforce the right of agricultural labourers to decent wages, gender parity in wages, job security, better working conditions and welfare measures and ensure punitive measures against offenders.
- Appoint statutory committees at all districts of Uttar Pradesh to identify within specified timeframe all the Scheduled Castes' lands occupied by non SCs illegally, to assess the quantum of compensation to be paid by non-SCs for their illegal utilization of lands, to identify original owners and nearest kith and kin for restoring these lands to them, and legal proceedings should be initiated in courts against the illegal occupants of lands belonging to SCs and punitive measures should be initiated against them.
- The Scheduled Caste women being a distinct category among women are being oppressed by three levels of discrimination, i.e., caste, class and patriarchy. Hence, there is a need to segregate data on SC women and make it available with Census reports and evolve a state level perspective plan for bringing SC women into the mainstream developmental programmes, market enterprises, financial allocation, reservation facilities in education, employment and health facilities and mandate the state commission for SCs and for women to study and report specifically the status of SC women in their annual reports.
- Effective implementation of SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 and Rules 1995, especially with regard to atrocities against SC women, and accordingly prosecute the culprits for perpetrating the atrocities and crimes on SCs. The nexus and complicity between dominant caste Hindus and law enforcing agencies must be busted.

- Ensure the representation of SCs in all public institutions of UP, i.e., whether universities or academic or autonomous or registered bodies. Those institutions, which do not abide by the principle of affirmative action, must be made ineligible for state funding.
- All private industry/corporate houses must accept and implement representational diversity in workforce immediately. Ensure that all state budget allocations are made as per the proportion of SC population and legal action must be taken against those who engage in embezzlement or swindling of funds.
- Every government and private organisation must implement supplier diversity from socially disadvantaged businesses and dealership diversity in all goods and services.
- The state must assume the sole responsibility in protecting the SCs. The state must identify those atrocity prone areas and deploy forces. In addition, provide arms licenses to the SCs and STs as stipulated in the Atrocities Act for self defense purposes, the setting up of SC self –defense groups from village onwards is mandatory and specifically train SC women to handle weapons in self-defense against the perpetrators of crimes and atrocities.
- Eliminate the humiliating practice of manual scavenging with an immediate effect through rehabilitation, alternative and sustainable employment measures and developmental programmes, and prosecute violators of the Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993, especially the gross violators such as Railways, Defense and Urban local bodies.
- Make it as mandatory for Parliament of India and State Assemblies' to debate on the annual reports of the national and state level commissions for SCs/STs and Safai Karamcharis within the following year, and ensure that these annual reports and the action-taken reports of the governments are made public.
- Make the reservation policy as mandatory in the private and corporate sectors in the same proportion as in the public sector and government institutions and develop the capacities and skills of SCs to help them cope up with the demands of these different sectors.
- Bring out white papers on the current status and implementation of reservation policy during the last seventy years of Indian independence and place it before the state assembly for debate and discussion and fill up the backlog positions meant for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes both in education and employment to further the process of empowerment and social justice.

Never the less, there is still a long way to go in establishing an egalitarian and democratic social order. In spite of various developmental policies and welfare measures, there has been some criticism in certain quarters with regard to the performance of BSP regime such as lopsided land acquisition policies, poor implementation of primary health schemes and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), uneven economic development of the regions and rising unemployment etc. The policies and programmes of the BSP regime have drawn the attention of both the admirers and critics equally. The success of unfulfilled aspirations of this unfinished revolution is to a large extent depends upon the commitment and dedication of the succeeding generations of the Bahujan leadership.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Christophe Jaffrelot (2003), *India's Silent Revolution: The rise of low castes in north Indian Politics*, New Delhi, p.10.

² For more information, see *Bhopal Declaration* (2002), Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal.



Sudhakara Karakoti

Teaches Political Science at Wollega University, Nekemte, Ethiopia.