



A political sketch of Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

Uttar Pradesh has been most dominant state in Indian politics since independence. It plays a crucial role in shaping and sharing the government in centre. It shares 80 seats of Lok Sabha which is the largest number among all Indian States. Almost half of the India's Prime Ministers have been produced from the soil of UP. The most distinguished leaders of the Indian National Congress (INC) and opposition Party also came from this State. It is a common assumption that only that party or alliance rules India which succeeds in UP. The INC dominated for long time in politics of India and the main reason of this supremacy was its hold over the country's biggest state i.e. on Uttar Pradesh. The devastation of INC in UP triggered the end of the party's monopoly of power in the country. Thus it can be rightly said that whosoever controls Uttar Pradesh controls the political power in the Country.

Keywords: political history, coalition government, major political parties, etc.

Introduction

One of the major cradles of Indian culture and civilisation, the state of Uttar Pradesh has been a fascinating confluence of myths, legends and history. The territory constituting Uttar Pradesh was known as *madhyadesh* in ancient times. Because of its athwart position as the route of invaders from the North-West and also because it formed part of the rich alluvial plain between Delhi and Patna. Its history is closely connected with that of North India. There are not many records available about its pre historic and pro historic periods ^[1]. The importance of pre-history of this area is being slowly unveiled by archaeologist discoveries. For instance, the Stone Age tools were excavated at Mirzapur, Banda and Hamirpur. Some remnants of the Harappa finds are noticed in some areas of Meerut district. It is also believed that the Gangetic plain had been occupied by men since ancient time. Fifteen thousand years ago, men in this region survived in the Palaeolithic age with a nomadic way of life. Before the advent of Aryans, the occupants were perhaps the Negritos, followed by the Proto-Australoids such as Dravidians, Nishads, Bhartas and others referred to as Dasas ^[2]. The later history of the ancient Aryavarta starts with the rise of 'sixteen *Mahajanapads*' (states). Out of these 16 janpadas, eight that existed in Uttar Pradesh ^[3].

Many of these *mahajanpadas* were monarchies, with rulers who established their kingdoms around capital cities, which acted as focal points where religious, political economic and military activities came to be concentrated ^[4]. Due to regular instability and conflict among janapadas rivals led to their gradual annexation by Magadh. The entire Northern India was

under Magadh during Alexander's invasions in 323 B.C. except Punjab and Bengal. At the same time Chandragupta Maurya captured the throne of Magadh, and led the foundation of Maurya dynasty. Evidence of availability of Asoka's Pillars at Sarnaath, Allahabad, Meerut, Kaushambi and Siddharthnagar proved that entire UP was part of Mauryan Empire. The territory now commonly known as Uttar Pradesh continued to enjoy peace and prosperity under the benign rule of Chandragupta and his successor ^[5]. The main rulers of Mauryan Empire were Chandragupta, his son Bindusara and his grandson Asoka. Soon after Asoka's death, political instability occurred in Magdhan Empire and Uttar Pradesh became the haunt for foreign invasions. After suffering from a century of foreign invasions, the rise of Gupta dynasty brought political unity in northern India in 4th Century A.D. Uttar Pradesh was also a part of Gupta dynasty. With the end of Gupta's period, Uttar Pradesh once again had disintegrated and continued till the appearance of Harshawardhna ^[6]. Harsha established his capital at Kannauj (with Harsha on the throne, the two houses of Thaneshwar and Kannauj became one). After Harshawardhna's death, political chaos and confusion once again descended on this region ^[7].

The strong political system was established once again in Northern India with the arrival of Muslim rulers in A.D 1206. First was the Slave dynasty which was started by Qutbuddin Aibak; slave of Muhammad Gauri who controlled the area of Delhi, Meerut, Kalinjar Mahoba and Koli (Aligarh). After that, Khilji dynasty was established. The main ruthless ruler of this dynasty was Allauddin Khilji who conquered Deccan and also maintained internal peace during his tenure. Khilji was taken over by Muhammad bin Tughlaq (founder of Tughlak dynasty).

¹ *Uttar Pradesh 1974*, n. 14, p. 15.

² Singh, n. 16, p. 7.

³ Lal Makhkhan, *Ancient India* (New Delhi: National Council of Research and Training, 2002), p. 114.

⁴ Gyanesh Kudaisya, *Region, Nation, Heartland Uttar Pradesh in India's Body Politic* (New Delhi: Sage, 2006), pp.12-13.

⁵ *Uttar Pradesh 1974*, n. 14, p.17.

⁶ Singh, n. 16, p. 7-8.

⁷ *Uttar Pradesh 1974*, n. 14, pp. 14-19.

The history of Uttar Pradesh during 13th and 14th century was only a tale of dauntless, resistance and ruthless repression. The Delhi Empire under the Tughlaks first disintegrated and an independent state was created in the Eastern part of this province during 1394 A.D. It was the Sharqi kingdom of Jaunpur founded by Malik-al-Sharq, Khwaja-i-Jahan Malik Sarwar, a rebel governor of Mohd Tughlaq. The Sharqi maintained their independence for 84 years during which they were constantly contesting with sultanate of Delhi, the sovereignty of Kannauj and other border districts. Four years after the succession of Jaunpur i.e. in 1398 A.D., India was invaded by Chughtai Turk 'Taimurlung. Though, the brunt of his ruthless savagery was born by Delhi and Punjab, the Doab did not escape it altogether. Meerut, Haridwar and Katehar had also taste of it. Timur's invasion led to the collapse of Tughlaq dynasty. From A.D. 1414 to 1526, Syed and Lodi princes ruled over the remnants of the Delhi Empire. An important landmark in the history of UP in this age was the adoption of Agra as sub capital of Sikndra Lodi^[8].

Babar (the founder of Mughal period) defeated Ibrahim Lodi in the battle of Panipat in 1526, and started to rule over the India. During Babar's period, Mughal rule had covered only some parts of Uttar Pradesh. However, Akbar who was a ruler with foresight and secular outlook, expanded his empire and heightened his grip over Ganga Yamuna Doab which was then not only the heartland of Hindustan but also the granary and economic hinge of Mughal Empire. Akbar's successors continued following Akbar's policy of grip over Uttar Pradesh. During that glorious period of Hindutan- the region now called as modern Uttar Pradesh- made valuable contribution to the national history. Todarmal and Birbal, the two famous ministers of Akbar belonged to Uttar Pradesh^[9]. Under the Mughals, UP and its surrounding areas were constituted into four *subahs* (provinces): Delhi (Haryana, Mewat, Uttarakhand, Rohilkhand), Agra (Braj, Bundelkhand), Awadh (Central districts) and Allahabad (Bhojpur, Bagelkhand)^[10]. Agra continued to be the capital of Mughal Empire until it was replaced by Delhi during the reign of Shahjahn^[11]. It is interesting to know that Mughal emperors also gave some of the world's finest buildings which are now notable historical monuments. The Mughal authority began to decline with the death of Aurangzeb and some decades later, the State assumed independent status under the Nawab of Oudh^[12].

Here it is significant to note that, till the British arrived in the mid eighteenth century, the territories of Uttar Pradesh did not share a common structure or history. Different kings, rulers, governors and chieftains had, over the course of history, controlled different parts of its territories. Political or administrative unity under a single political authority was extremely rare, if not altogether absent. Instead, all along, distinct regions had existed: the hill areas of Uttarakhand or Uttaranchal; the distinct Braj- speaking zone around Mathura; the Bundelkhand region centred in Jhansi; Rohilkhand

comprising areas around Rampur and Moradabad; Awadh, with Lucknow as its cultural centre and finally, Poorvanchal made up of the Bhojpuri speaking eastern parts with Banaras and Allahabad as its main centres^[13]. Once the British extended their domain in India, they started to detach areas from the Bengal Presidency^[14].

The beginning of British interference in the affairs of Uttar Pradesh, which they then called upper India from their location in Calcutta, changed the situation completely. They inaugurated a process of conquest and amalgamation which changed the political geography of Northern India^[15]. The acquisition of Uttar Pradesh by the Britishers started from the battle of Buxer after the defeat of Nawab of Oudh in 1764. Consequently, the cessation of Banaras in 1775 consolidated British formal authority in this part of North India. The administration of these regions was run by Britishers from Calcutta which was called by them as Bengal presidency. The Britishers ruled and run the administration according to their own convenience and that's why they reorganised these areas many times. For example, in 1836, Bengal presidency was reorganized for reasons of economy and administrative efficiency and it was renamed as North Western Provinces and Oudh became a part of North Western Province. Under the annexationist policy of Dalhousie in 1856, it put under a chief commissioner^[16].

In 1877, the Lieutenant Governorship of the North-Western provinces and the chief commissionership of Oudh were amalgamated. The combined provinces were known as the North Western provinces of Agra and Oudh. In 1902 A.D, the two provinces which were formally united as North Western Province (NWP) were again reorganized and called as United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. In 1920 it was made a 'Governor Province' and its capital shifted to Lucknow. In 1937, the words Agra and Oudh were dropped and it was renamed as United Provinces. Two and half years after the attainment of independence, i.e. on January 12, 1950, the territory received its present name of Uttar Pradesh and the next day, a large number of enclaves of neighbouring provinces were absorbed therein^[17]. For instance, native states of Tehri, Ghrahwal, Rampur and Banaras were also merged with it^[18]. On the coming into force of the constitution of India on January 26, 1950 Uttar Pradesh acquired the status of a state within the Indian union^[19]. In 2000-2001 a separate Himalayan state, Uttaranchal (presently known as Uttarakhand) was carved out of Uttar Pradesh. At the same time, the political importance of UP is likely to be as great as ever, despite the loss of 18 percent of its population to Uttaranchal^[20].

After Independence UP has/ had to deal with the troubled legacy of partition, as well as with the large Muslim minority, which remained in the state. It saw some of the key political debates related to Muslims, which proved to be a turning point

⁸ Uttar Pradesh 1974, n. 14, p. 21.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Kudaisya, n. 22, p. 13.

¹¹ Uttar Pradesh 1974, n. 14, pp. 21-22.

¹² Singh, n. 16, p. 6.

¹³ Kudaisya, n. 22, p. 14.

¹⁴ Bhandari, n. 18, p. 29.

¹⁵ Kudaisya, n. 22, p. 13.

¹⁶ Uttar Pradesh 1974, n. 14, p. 22.

¹⁷ Uttar Pradesh 1974, n. 14, p. 23

¹⁸ Pitam Singh, p. 63.

¹⁹ Uttar Pradesh 1974, n. 14, p.23

²⁰ Yadav, n. 5, p. 42.

in the electoral history of Uttar Pradesh such as Hindi-Urdu controversy, the agitation for the ban on cow slaughter, anti Shabbano campaign and the Ayodhya movement. It reveals that the history of contemporary communalism can be traced to the complex connections between political power and electoral politics of Uttar Pradesh ^[21].

Political and administrative setup of Uttar Pradesh

UP plays a crucial role in shaping and sharing the government in centre. It shares 80 seats of Lok Sabha which is the largest number among all Indian States. Almost half of the India's Prime Ministers have been produced from the soil of UP. The most distinguished leaders of the Indian National Congress (INC) and opposition Party also came from this State. It is a common assumption that only that party or alliance rules India which succeeds in UP. The INC dominated for long time in politics of India and the main reason of this supremacy was its hold over the country's biggest state i.e. on Uttar Pradesh. The devastation of INC in UP triggered the end of the party's monopoly of power in the country. Thus it can be rightly said that whosoever controls Uttar Pradesh controls the political power in the Country ^[22].

In the general election of 1952, INC party emerged as the single victorious party and won 81 seats for Lok Sabha out of 85 seats of Uttar Pradesh. INC also got 390 seats in first UP Assembly elections out of 430 seats. Thus, it was the INC which formed the government in Uttar Pradesh under the leadership of Vallabh Pant. Earliest INC politics was influenced by Nehruvian vision of development which was a combination of Nehru's own socialist thinking and Gandhian vision of Gram Swaraj which established moral and supreme village society. However, INC rule in UP that was the combination of Nehru and Gandhi ideology, focused deeply towards the development programmes. INC was the main propagator of rural politics in the State. Numbers of schemes were also launched by INC for the upliftment of the people particularly of rural areas. They were also given the feeling of participation in the management of some local matters through the panchayati raj system. UP was also headed by a few leading personalities like C.B Gupta and Charan Singh during INC period. For instance C.B Gupta, who was one of the strongest leader represented urban trend interest among the people of UP and the Charan Singh improved the agrarian condition of rural areas.

Thus, initial phase of Indian politics was a single party dominated system and UP was a part of it. The INC reigned for long and carried out all developmental programmes easily in State only because of weak oppositions and disintegration among Non Congress parties especially Jana Sangh, Parja Socialist Party, BJP, Lok Dal etc. These parties were proved weak to perform their responsibilities ^[23]. No political party could serve any alternative before the people to replace the INC. As a result Uttar Pradesh was dominated by single political party till 1967. During fourth general election of Parliament, the grip of INC over the state had been shaken due

to the emergence of other strong political parties. Despite this fact, the INC was able to form the government in the Assembly elections of 1969 in U.P.

In June 1977, nine States including Uttar Pradesh were dissolved by the ruling Central Government on the ground that the existing States government had lost their legitimacy and mandate of the electorates since the people's mandate had been in the favour of Janta Party. Consequently, fresh elections were held in 1977 and Janta party got the majority seats of 351 from 425 and UP was led by coalition government. Janta Party's victory in Assembly elections of UP was considered a big victory of democracy ^[24]. In 1977 Janta party replaced INC and formed majority government under the leadership of Ram Naresh Yadav. Unfortunately, the Janta Government could not complete its full term. Its total period of rule was only for a period of 2 years, 4 month and 28 days. As a result, President's rule was imposed in UP. Consequently, INC once again came in power in 1980 and President's rule was ended in UP.

Year 1980 was the time of political crisis in UP because religion has entered in politics. For example the Vishva Hindu Parishad declares itself as the guardian of Hindutva and announced Ram Janm Bhoomi Mukti Andolan which led towards the communal riots hereafter. Political developments contributed to the communal polarisation of the UP electorate in the mid 1980. In 1984 the assassination of Indira Gandhi took place and communal riot had started at many places. Amidst these the entry of Rajiv Gandhi in centre, and his raw attempts to satisfy communal elements, both among the Hindus and Muslims produced polarisation in state which was exploited effectively by BJP. As the Hindu Vote turned more and more towards BJP, the newly formed Janta Dal was able to project itself as the party that cared for the minorities, a legacy that Mulayam Singh later exploited to his advantage ^[25]. Till November 1989, there had been INC rule in UP almost throughout, except for a short interlude from 1977 to 1980 when there was rule of Janta party in Delhi and non Congress party government was formed in UP also. Unfortunately, Morarji Desai government collapsed in mid-1979 and under the short rule of Charan Singh, the state went to poll again in 1980 along with the country and INC was back in power both at centre as well as in UP. The State was subjected to another polls in November 1989 and this time Mulayam Singh Yadav became Chief Minister after the collapse of V.P. Singh Government in Delhi. Unfortunately, Singh could not fulfil his full term and this state faced another premature election in May 1991. In this election his BJP won with a clear majority and Kalyan Singh was sworn in as Chief Minister of UP ^[26].

The early 1990s also saw UP becoming the fulcrum of a major churning in the Indian political scene: the championship of hindutva by BJP, the move towards building a temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya that reached a violent upsurge in December 1992 and the announcement of Mandal commission report's recommendations. All this led to a polarisation of communities along caste and religious lines. This polarisation

²¹ Ibid, p. 43.

²² Yadav, n. 5, p. 41-43.

²³ Singh, n.16, p. 46.

²⁴ Singh, n. 16, p.58

²⁵ A.K. Verma, "Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh", *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 39 (14/15) (April 3-14 2004), pp. 1510. Total 1509 -1514

²⁶ Bhandari, n. 18, pp. 43-44.

coincided with Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections which subsequently saw the rise of new political forces in UP- the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the BSP [27].

Consequently, Kalyan Singh government was dismissed after the event of demolition of Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992 (the event that Indian history would remember forever) on the ground that Singh Govt had failed in maintaining law and order in State. President's rule was imposed again and continued till November 1993, till fresh elections were held. Unfortunately, 1993 election gave a hung Assembly. BJP were failed to secure majority but emerged as the single largest party with 177 seats. They staked claim to form government on the basis of being the single largest party but this claim was not accepted by the Governor of State. In 1993 elections, the second largest party was the Samajwadi Party with 109 seats. Mulayam Singh Yadav (leader of the SP), formed a coalition government with BSP; which had a strength of 69 seats. This coalition government also received the external support of Congress (I) which had 28 seats, the Janta Dal 28 seats, the CPI (M) and others with six seats. This had given clear majority to the coalition and Mulayam Singh Yadav was sworn in as chief Minister on 14th December 1993 [28].

The coalition of around 18 months could not complete its term because on 1st June 1995, BSP withdrew its support from Mulayam Singh Yadav, egged on by BJP and citing atrocities on Dalits as excuse allowing the coalition government to fall [29]. The main reason behind withdrawal of support by BSP was that SP and BSP could not develop harmonious relations with each other. That's why the experiment of coalition government was short lived (1993-1995) [30].

Meanwhile Mayawati had emerged as an aggressive campaigner of BSP as Kanshi Ram's political heir-apparent. However, Mayawati had secured the outside support of BJP. Hence Mulayam Singh Yadav Government was dismissed and a new government led by Mayawati (as Chief Minister) was formed on 3rd June 1995. Thereby, Mayawati became the first Dalit woman Chief Minister in the history of UP. In June 1995, she took up the reins of the country's most populous state. She was just 39 years old at that time [31]. It was also historically significant in the political history of UP, where after Sucheta Kriplani, who was the first woman C.M. of UP, Mayawati became second.

The Mayawati government lasted for less than five months as on 17th October 1995, a letter of withdrawal of support from BJP to the BSP was presented in front of Governor. Thereof, Mayawati tendered her resignation. Her resignation was duly accepted by Governor and he promptly recommended imposition of the President's rule under Article 356 on the ground that constitutional machinery had broken down in the State. Hence President's rule was imposed on 18th October 1995 in UP. From the end of 1989 till October 1996, the State

had short rules under four Chief Ministers and two long spells of President's rule [32].

In 1996, BSP went to the polls with Congress as its ally. It won 67 seats, depriving both the Samajwadi party and BJP of a clear majority. New Assembly was constituted and Govt was formed with the alliance of BJP and BSP. A strange arrangement was worked out with the BJP by which the Chief ministership was to rotate every six months. For the first six months, Mayawati held the post of C.M [33]. Then Kalyan Singh was charged with Chief Ministership. Meanwhile, Singh faced difficulty with the withdrawal of support by BSP but was able to gain majority in Assembly. Due to loss trust of his party members, Kalyan Singh was followed by Ram Prakash Gupta and then Rajnath Singh as C.M. of the State. The list of the Chief Ministers of UP is given in table 2. See source

The 2002 Assembly elections result gave hung Assembly again because no party could get absolute majority and situation was like imposition of President's rule will take place again in UP. The result of political parties was such as that the BJP got only 88 seats in this election as compared to 174 in 1996 elections. The Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samajwadi party had improved considerably on their earlier performance got 174 and 97 compared to 110 and 67 seats in previous, while Congress had dropped to a mere 26 seats compared to 33 in the 1996 Assembly election. Both the SP and BSP had obtained more seats than the BJP and changed the trend of BJP as the single largest party in the state. The INC, despites its greater efforts to revive the state unit under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi experienced even further decline. While changes reflected in the elections results were of great significance for the state and the country as whole. The main aim here is to identify and discuss the causes underlying the persistent political instability that the state has suffered during the 1990s resulting in economic and political break down and the emergence of hung Assembly again in 2002 election [34]. As a result, Coalition government once again came up in UP with the support of BJP and BSP and Mayawati took the charge of C.M. for third time. However, when the Mayawati Government fell, Mulayam Singh formed the government in August 2003 by putting together a coalition comprising of the INC, SP, RLD, Rashtriya Kranti Dal, CPI (M), Samajwadi Janta party, Janta Party and National Loktantrik Party, etc. Here, it is important to note that, this was the first time that the INC, SP and RLD had come together [35].

Presently, the political scene in Uttar Pradesh has changed and alliance Government has shifted to single majority government. Before the elections results of Assembly of 2007, it was predicted that the dominating political parties (SP or BSP) would be winner and it was the BSP who emerged as victorious. The result of Assembly election of 2007 surprised the whole country along with the people of Uttar Pradesh by

²⁷ "Kashi Ram Legacy", *Economy & Political Weekly*, Vol. 41 (41) (October 14-20, 2006), p. 4304.

²⁸ Bhandari, n. 18, pp. 43-44.

²⁹ Bhaskar Roy, "Paradoxes of Dalit politics in Uttar Pradesh", *India international centre Quarterly*, Vol. 29 (2), (Monsoon 2002), p. 112, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23005783>. pp.107-116,

³⁰ Verma, n. 47, pp. 1512.

³¹ Roy, n. 51, p. 112.

³² Bhandari, n. 18, p. 43-44

³³ Roy, p. 113.

³⁴ Sudha Pai, "Electoral Identity Politics in Uttar Pradesh: Hung Assembly Again", *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol.37 (14), (April 6-12, 2002), p. 1334.

³⁵ Verma, n. 47, pp. 1512.

decisively voting to BSP to power thereby ended the era of fractured mandates, hung assemblies and coalition government which had overwhelmed the state since 1993. The BSP got an absolute majority of 206 seats leaving all others far behind^[36]. It is also important to note that the BSP was able to fulfil its five years term as ruling party after long time. The result of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election of 2012 saw the incumbent BSP losing to the Samajwadi Party. Although, the trend of the single party majority government is continue in UP. However, current election saw the change of ruling party from BSP to SP. It was SP which won a massive vote of 224 of the total 403 seats with a vote share of 29.15%. In terms of the number of seats, this was the best performance by any party since the INC victory in 1985 when it won 269 of the 425 seats of undivided Uttar Pradesh. On the other hand, its main rival the incumbent BSP performed poorly. From the 2007 high of 206 seats, the BSP crashed to just 80 seats, a massive drop of 126. The party secured almost 26% of the vote, down 4.5 percentage point since 2007. The BJP finished third with 47 seats and Congress could get 28 seats in this elections.

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³⁶ A. K. Verma, "Mayawati Sandwich Coalition", *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 42 (22) (June 2-8 2007), p. 2039.