Ethnic Parties, Material Politics and the Ethnic Poor : The Bahujan Samaj Party in North India

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Abstract

Many studies explore the determinants of support for ethnic parties, and the consequences of such parties for democracy. This dissertation addresses these questions through a study of the Bahujan Samaj Party (B.S.P.) in India's largest state, Uttar Pradesh (U.P.). The BSP is India's only successful lower caste party, and gained greatest support over the last two decades in U.P., which it now rules.

The dissertation argues that material benefits, delivered on a programmatic basis, account for the success of the B.S.P., and perhaps other ethnic parties too, among poorer groups. It also indicates that the B.S.P.'s consequences for democracy – on the whole positive – have depended both on its ties to society, and the breadth of visions of community reigning among its core supporters. The conclusions are based on analyses of electoral results, the caste background of party candidates, patterns of ownership of land and other resources, extensive interviews with party leaders and activists, and ethnographic studies of representative villages in U.P.

The argument about the reasons for support questions an assumption common to psychological theories of ethnic voting – that poorer groups vote for ethnic parties because they draw symbolic empowerment from the material ascendancy that ethnic parties secure for coethnic elites. On the contrary, I find that the poorer of the B.S.P.'s low caste voters support the party largely for material reasons. These voters vary in the kinds of benefits they receive and that motivate their support – patronage benefits in some cases, as many studies of ethnic mobilization in developing contexts predict ; and programmatic benefits in others. Such asymmetric representation could be common among parties with ambitious redistributive goals.

The dissertation also takes issue with the view that strong party-society ties, ipso facto, facilitate a democratic politics. It shows that the breadth of visions of community prevailing at the party's base are also crucial. The B.S.P. has been equally

tied to the Chamar caste, its core constituency, in Eastern and Western U.P. But, Chamars have facilitated the party's efforts to widen its subaltern base in the East, and obstructed these efforts in the West. This variation has arisen because Chamars have embraced broad and diffuse notions of subaltern community in Eastern U.P., but narrow and parochial visions in the West.

Résumé

De nombreuses études se penchent sur les facteurs expliquant l'appui citoyen aux partis ethniques ainsi que les conséquences d'un tel appui en ce qui a trait à la démocratie. Cette thèse aborde ces questions à travers une étude du Parti Bahujan Samaj (PBS) dans le plus grand État indien, l'Uttar Pradesh (UP). Le PBS est le seul parti de basses castes ayant connu un succès électoral en Inde, et dirige maintenant l'UP, résultat d'une popularité croissante au cours des deux dernières décennies.

Cette thèse argumente que les avantages matériels, distribués de façon programmatique, expliquent le succès du PBS, et sans doute celui d'autres partis ethniques représentant les couches les plus pauvres de la société. L'impact du PBS sur la démocratie, dans l'ensemble positif, dépend de ses relations avec la société ainsi que de l'étendue des visions d'une communauté subalterne règnant au sein de ses principaux partisans. Les conclusions sont fondées sur une analyse des résultats électoraux, des origines des candidats électoraux en terme de caste, et de la distribution démographique des terres et des ressources, ainsi que des entrevues approfondies avec leaders et activistes du parti, et une étude ethnographique de villages pertinents en UP.

L'argument remet en question une hypothèse courante dans les théories psychologiques du vote ethnique, selon laquelle les plus pauvres votent pour des partis ethniques parce qu'ils tirent de l'ascendance matérielle d'un parti, une forme d' "autonomisation" symbolique. Cependant, l'étude démontre que les plus pauvres parmi les basses castes appuient le parti pour des raisons surtout matérielles. Les électeurs varient en fonction des types de bénéfices qu'ils reçoivent, du patronage (sur lequel mettent l'emphase de nombreuses études liées à la mobilisation ethnique) aux avantages programmatiques. Ces représentations assymmétriques pourraient être courantes chez les partis ayant des objectifs de redistribution ambitieux.

La thèse remet également en question l'hypothèse selon laquelle des relations solides entre parti et société promeuvent la démocratie. Le PBS est tout aussi lié à la caste chamar dans l'Est et dans l'Ouest de l'UP. Pourtant, à l'Est, là où les Chamars ont épousé une vision englobante et diffuse d'une communauté subalterne, le parti a réussi à étendre son appui populaire; inversement, à l'Ouest, la vision étroite de la communauté subalterne adoptée par les Chamars a posé un obstacle à l'étendue de l'appui au parti.

Contents

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Abbreviations

ADMK : Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazagham

AVP : Ambedkar Village Programme

BAMCEF : Backward and Minority Community Employees Federation

BJP : Bharatiya Janata Party

BKD : Bharatiya Kranti Dal

BLD : Bharatiya Lok Dal

BSP : Bahujan Samaj Party

CPI : Communist Party of India

CPI(M) : Communist Party of India (Marxist)

DK : Dravida Kazhagam

DLRC : District Land Records Clerk

DM : District Magistrate

DMK : Dravida Munnetra Kazagham

IAS : Indian Administrative Service

IAY : Indira Awas Yojana

IPS : Indian Police Service

IRDP : Integrated Rural Development Programme

JD : Janata Dal

MLA : Member of Legislative Assembly

MLC : Member of Legislative Council

MP : Member of Parliament

OBC : Other Backward Classes

PPP : Public-Private Partnership

RLD : Rashtriya Lok Dal

SC : Scheduled Castes

SC/ST Act : Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act

SO : Station Officer

SP : Samajwadi Party

SP : Superintendent of Police

SSP : Samyukta Socialist Party

ST : Scheduled Tribes

VDO : Village Development Officer

VHP : Vishwa Hindu Parishad

Glossary

adhiya : form of sharecropping where both the crop, and the costs of cultivation, are shared between tenant and landowner on a half and half basis

attar : fragrant essential oil/perfume obtained from flowers

bahujan : majority of the people/subaltern or plebeian

bahujan samaj : the community of those who constitute the majority

behenji : elder sister/ term used to respectfully address, or allude to, a middle-aged woman, and one used by BSP cadres to refer to Mayawati

bhaiyya : brother

bidi : handrolled cigarettes wrapped in *tendu* leaves

bojh : bundle of grain

chamcha : sycophant

charpai : stringbed

chopla : junction

dalit : broken to pieces, or oppressed/first popularized by the Dalit Panthers, a radical movement in the Indian state of Maharashtra, this term is now widely used to refer to Scheduled Castes

gram sabha : village assembly

harijan : children of god/term coined by Gandhi to refer to Scheduled Castes

panchayat : institution of local self-governance

patwari : village land records keeper

pradhan : head of village *panchayat*

samagra : whole/entire

sarvajan samaj : the all-inclusive community

sharia : Muslim personal law

talukdar : intermediary between the cultivator and the state in British India, who who was responsible for the collection of revenue from a number of villages, and recognized as the landlord of an entire *taluk*, or revenue collection area.

tehsil : district subdivision

tehsil diwas : *tehsil* day /the day on which a weekly forum of officials and villagers was held at the *tehsil* during BSP rule

tehsildar : subdivisional district magistrate, responsible for the administration of the *tehsil*

thanedar : officer in charge of a police station

ulema : Muslim clergy

zamindar : local village authority who was an intermediary between the cultivator and the state in British India, who was recognized by the British as being the landlord of his estate

Terminology

Scheduled Castes

"Scheduled Castes"(SCs) are so called because they remain "listed in a separate Schedule of the Indian Constitution as eligible for affirmative action benefits." [1] Legislation granting quotas to SCs (whereby jobs in the state administration and public sector, and seats in state-funded educational institutions, and national and state legislatures, were reserved for them) was first enacted in 1943. [2] SCs comprise "a collection of 450 castes that have historically" occupied the lowest tier of the caste hierarchy, and "been treated as 'untouchables' by [high] caste Hindu society." [3] They have thus qualified for compensatory discrimination on two grounds : economic deprivation, *and* social subordination.

SCs have also been referred to as *harijans* and *dalits* in Indian political discourse. The term *harijan*, meaning "children of God," was coined by Mohandas Gandhi ; it has, however, come to be construed as condescending, and is rarely used by SCs today in self-reference. The term *dalit*, "meaning 'broken to pieces' or 'oppressed,'" was "popularized by the Dalit Panthers, a radical movement in the state of Maharashtra" [4] ; while more widely used than the term *harijan,* I found its employment restricted to Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) sympathizers alone, [5] and even amongst this group, it was only the more educated SCs who referred to themselves as *dalits*. Consequently, I use the term "Scheduled Castes," "the more common term

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[1] Kanchan Chandra, "The Transformation of Ethnic Politics in India : The Decline of Congress and the Rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Hoshiarpur," *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 59, No. 1(2000) : 27.
[2] Stuart Corbridge, "Competing Inequalities : The Scheduled Tribes and the Reservations System in India's Jharkhand," *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 59, No. 1(2000) : 62, n. 1.
[3] Chandra, "The Transformation of Ethnic Politics in India," 27.
[4] Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed : Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2004), xv.
[5] Those SCs voting for the Congress, or the BJP, tend not to see themselves as *dalits*, or oppressed by upper castes. They remain keen to adopt upper caste modes of behaviour, and ways of life, and assimilate into caste Hindu society, as opposed to BSP voters, who espouse a much stronger critique of caste ideology.

of self-identification," to refer to what constitutes the core of the BSP's target constituency.[6]

Scheduled Tribes

"Scheduled Tribes" (STs) also qualify for affirmative action benefits under the Indian Constitution, which, as in the case of SCs, enumerates the list of STs in a Schedule. Legislation awarding reservations to STs was passed in India in 1950. Unlike SCs, STs were understood by the Indian state as being "outside the caste system and in key respects … undivided" ; their economic backwardness was thus seen as having arisen, not from low ritual status, but from their primitive way of life, and remote habitation.[7] While STs form part of the BSP's target constituency in Uttar Pradesh, they constitute a tiny fraction of the population in the state (0.1 percent, the figure for SCs being 21.1 percent [8]), which makes them an insignificant political bloc on the whole.

Other Backward Classes

The term "Other Backward Classes" (OBCs) was first used by Jawaharlal Nehru in a speech on his Objectives Resolution, delivered to the Constituent Assembly on December 13, 1946, to refer to those sections of the Indian populace who remained socially and educationally backward, after SCs and STs had been counted out. Nehru announced that they required special measures to be adopted on their behalf, and Article 340 of the Indian Constitution recommended that the President of India nominate a Commission to investigate the condition of these classes, and propose steps for their upliftment.[9] The First and Second Backward Classes Commission (appointed in 1953 and 1979 under the chairmanship of Kaka Kelkar and B.P. Mandal respectively, with a mandate to identify "backward classes" and propose measures to improve their condition) both relied on the concept of

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[6] Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed,* xv. My finding that "Scheduled Castes" was the term most likely to be used in self-reference thus concurs with Chandra's.
[7] Corbridge, "Competing Inequalities," 69.
[8] *Census of India, 2001.*
[9] Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Rise of the Other Backward Classes in the Hindi Belt," *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 59, No. 1(2000) : 87-8.

caste to define "backwardness." The Kelkar Commission's report was rejected by Nehru's Congress government, which argued that the use of the caste criterion would serve to perpetuate existing caste distinctions. The Mandal Commission, which argued that the backward classes were coterminous with low castes, and that their backwardness justified a quota of 27 percent, also had its recommendations ignored by the Congress governments of Indira Gandhi, and then, Rajiv Gandhi. It was only after the Janata Dal (JD) came to power in 1989 that the Commission's report was made public. The year 1990 further saw its recommendations being implemented by the JD government,[10] a development that was facilitated by the JD's programme of social justice, which turned around ascriptive groups, rather than class.[11]

The term "OBC" thus refers to all those low castes, situated below upper castes, and above SCs in the caste hierarchy, who were awarded reservations in 1990, and thereafter.[12] It is important to note that there are wide class and status variations within OBCs ; the better off sections amongst them employ and exploit SC agricultural labour no less than upper castes themselves. As such, it is only the poorer and less privileged OBC communities whom the BSP defines as plebeian, and sees as constituting part of the subaltern coalition that it seeks to build. In this study, I use the terms "OBCs" and "backwards" interchangeably ; I also distinguish between more and less privileged OBC groups, referring to the former as "upper OBCs" and the latter as "lower OBCs."

Bahujans

As defined by the BSP, the term *"bahujan"* refers to SCs, STs, and lower OBCs, the latter hailing from both Hindu and Muslim communities. These constituencies, taken together, comprise the *"bahujan samaj,"* or plebeian political majority, that the party seeks to build. I use the terms *"bahujans,"* "plebeians" and "subalterns" interchangeably, to refer to the communities comprising this coalition.

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[10] Ibid., 88, 94.
[11] Ibid., 95.
[12] The list of OBCs has grown over the years, as caste communities, some not so backward, have fought valiantly for their inclusion within the list, and for their share of the 27 percent quota.

The Chamar caste constitutes the BSP's core ethnic constituency. Their political behaviour differs in some respects from that of other *bahujans*. I use the term "non-Chamar *bahujans*" to refer to subaltern constituencies other than Chamars.

1

Introduction

That ethnic politics can aid democratization is hardly a self-evident proposition. Ethnic mobilization has frequently encouraged the formation of permanent majorities, the exclusion of ethnic minorities, and facilitated ethnic violence. Ethnic conflict has seen opposing groups make extreme claims and irreconcilable demands, leading to the break-up of states. But the focus on the intolerant nature of ethnic claims-making, and the violent and unstable outcomes of ethnic politics, deflects attention from the democratic ends often pursued by ethnic movements.

One reason why ethnic movements have occasioned violence is that they have threatened structures of privilege, enjoyed by particular ethnic groups over others. Violence, furthermore, has been used, not only to attack privilege, but also to defend it. And where backward ethnic groups have indeed been responsible for violent outcomes, it has to be remembered that movement legacies have often been muddled, combining such outcomes with the achievement of egalitarian ends.

Partition and secession, again, have often resulted from efforts by ethnic groups to secure the conditions of a dignified political existence, where this last has been impossible to attain within the original polity. For nation-states have often rested on an exclusionary logic, being forged by "insider" groups who have closed ranks against "outsiders," depriving the latter of effective citizenship. The excluded have often resorted to ethnic mobilization to effect an entry into the nation ; where they have failed, partition and secession have served to secure exit, and in many instances, democratic political futures.

Thus, even though ethnic movements have not always espoused goals conducive to the attainment of egalitarian outcomes, they have served the ends of justice more often than has been recognized. This study, emphasizing the democratic

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impact of ethnic mobilization, argues that our assessment of ethnic politics must take note of its egalitarian effects, no less than its violent and unstable ones. It draws attention to the impact ethnic mobilization may have on *economic* democracy in particular, and suggests that it is fallacious to dismiss ethnic politics as being irrelevant to material outcomes. Left critiques of ethnic politics make the charge that it subverts class mobilization, and remains aloof to the issue of economic inequality. But such critiques overlook the role played by ethnic parties in securing material empowerment for poorer ethnic constituencies, in contexts where class-based appeals have failed to mobilize the ethnic poor, or where class parties, upon capturing power, have fallen short of delivering the goods. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the lower caste party in North India discussed in this thesis, defies the left stereotype of ethnic parties. The BSP has sought to empower the lower caste poor through not merely a symbolic, but also a material politics ; it has attempted, furthermore, to deliver material gains on a programmatic basis, not unlike left parties themselves.

1. Background to the Problem

This thesis studies the BSP, an ethnic party that has risen to remarkable prominence in North India, and the state of Uttar Pradesh in particular, since the 1990s. The BSP was formed in 1984 by Kanshi Ram, a Scheduled Caste (SC) leader,[1] and took its name from the term *bahujan*, meaning "majority of the people," the party's long-term goal being the consolidation of a plebeian political majority comprising a coalition of Hindu low castes and religious minorities.[2] The BSP's depiction of the *bahujan samaj* (the community of those who constitute the majority) turned on a binary that pitted it against Hindu upper caste communities, who were portrayed as constituting both its political and ideological "other." This binary derived its force from a critique of votebank politics, which entailed the political marginalization of *bahujan* communities (henceforth also *bahujans*/subalterns/ plebeians) within parties that came to power with their votes, but which only had

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[1] For a note on the term "Scheduled Castes," see the Terminology section.
[2] Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed : Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2004), 15.

upper caste leaders, and catered only to upper caste interests, the most notable of such parties being the Congress. The BSP aimed at destroying these vertical networks of mobilization, and substituting them with a politics that had *bahujans* voting for a party that nominated *bahujan* candidates, and was committed to *bahujan* interests, namely, itself.

But with most of its target constituencies being caught in the web of votebank politics at the time of its inception, the BSP was forced to adjust its goal in the immediate term, and focus on the relatively modest task of mobilizing SCs, those low castes who "have historically been treated as 'untouchable' by [high caste] Hindu society," [3] and who consequently occupy the lowest rung of the caste ladder, and still more specifically, Chamars, the largest SC community in Uttar Pradesh. The BSP succeeded in consolidating Chamar support by the mid-1990s, an achievement that was facilitated by developments unfolding in the state in the early part of the decade. For the central government had implemented educational and job quotas in the state sector for the Other Backward Classes (henceforth OBCs, or backwards),[4] a conglomeration of low castes situated above SCs in the caste hierarchy, in 1990. This proved to be a landmark event, in that it provided the breakthrough necessary for a horizontal mobilization of lower castes to take place in North India, for the first time since independence.

Central reservation policy, prior to 1990, had applied to SCs and Scheduled Tribes (STs) alone, who had shared a quota of 22.5 percent between themselves [5] ; the 27 percent quota now awarded to OBCs hiked reservations to 49.5 percent, which drastically reduced the share of government jobs available to upper castes. This provoked a vehement backlash against reservations amongst upper caste communities, which polarized forward and backward caste identities in Uttar Pradesh, and made the maintenance of vertical coalitions integrating upper and lower castes difficult. This new scenario saw the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerge as the representative of the social strata threatened by reservations, namely, upper castes, while the two lower caste parties in the state, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the BSP,

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[3] Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*, 16.

[4] For a note on the term "Other Backward Classes," see the Terminology section.

[5] For a note on the term "Scheduled Tribes," see the Terminology section.

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defended reservations, and emerged as champions of OBC and SC interests respectively. But the BSP's base, *especially in Western Uttar Pradesh*, continued to remain confined to Chamars in the mid-1990s, with non-Chamar SCs and non-SC *bahujans* still holding back from delivering the party a committed vote.

Given this context, the BSP's "multiethnic transformation," achieved through the nomination of non-*bahujan* candidates from 1996 onwards (non-*bahujans* were granted tickets for the first time in the 1996 state assembly elections, and continued to be nominated thereafter) came to be seen as an opportunistic strategy aimed at capturing power, and as violating the party's original vision. The BSP's decision to ally, and govern, with an upper caste party like the BJP was also interpreted in the same way ; it did not help that Uttar Pradesh saw no less than three BSP-BJP governments (1995, 1997, and 2002-2003) over the 1995-2004 period.

This understanding of the BSP as an opportunistic party, ready to subordinate its *bahujan* ideology to the compulsions of electoral politics, had its roots in the perception that the party leadership was interested in power for its own sake, rather than as a means of *bahujan* empowerment. This perception, in turn, derived from the impression that the party had done little for the poorer sections of its subaltern base, materially speaking, upon forming the government. It was argued that the BSP's strict enforcement of SC reservations had channelled economic benefits solely to the SC middle class, leaving the party to deliver only symbolic empowerment, deriving from coethnic representation and an aggressive politics of dignity, to the SC poor. For the latter had had only one, rather inadequate, window of material benefits open to them during BSP rule, namely, patronage, delivered by SC legislators to coethnic constituents, on a whimsical basis, and on the strength of personalistic ties.

It is against this understanding of the BSP as having secured mainly symbolic gains for the ethnic poor, and of the ethnic poor as having supported the party largely on dignity-related grounds,[6] that I now go on to articulate my research problem.

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[6] I discuss the literature supporting this understanding in Chapter 2.

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2. The Problem

My research problem consists of a series of inter-related questions, which may be stated as follows :

1. If the Chamar poor have supported the BSP for symbolic reasons, more specifically, for the symbolic benefits accruing from coethnic representation, why have they voted for the party following its widescale nomination of non-*bahujan* candidates in the 1996 state assembly elections, and after?

2. Furthermore, if the BSP has delivered only patronage by way of material benefits, what explains Chamar support for the party following its multiethnic transformation, when a loss of coethnic representation has resulted in a loss of patronage, usually secured by legislators for coethnic constituents given a context of ethnic politics?

3. If the BSP's nomination of non-*bahujans* has imposed burdens (loss of coethnic representation and patronage) on the Chamar poor, then this suggests that the party's relationship with this constituency has changed from what it was prior to the multiethnic phase. What relationship has this change had to the BSP's multiethnic transformation, if any? Has it disabled, or enabled, this transformation in any way?

4. Has the BSP's treatment of Chamars differed from its treatment of other constituencies in its multiethnic phase? Or has the party treated all its constituencies symmetrically? How have these constituencies, in turn, treated the party? Have patterns of support coincided, or varied, across constituencies?

5. I have indicated that the BSP has had much less success mobilizing non-Chamar *bahujans* in Western Uttar Pradesh than in the East. What accounts for the different responses elicited by the party from this particular subaltern constituency in the two regions?

3. The Argument

This thesis, taking issue with psychological theories of ethnic voting, argues that the Chamar poor have not supported the BSP for symbolic reasons alone. There is little doubt that the BSP has secured more symbolic than material gains for this constituency ; the dignity gains accruing to Chamar labour from (1) the election of coethnics nominated by the BSP in its early phase ; (2) the subaltern-friendly administrations provided by BSP governments ; and (3) the latter's strict implementation of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act (henceforth the SC/ST Act, which makes the humiliation and harassment of SCs an offence punishable by law), have surpassed the material benefits they have received from the party. But this is not to say that material considerations have played no part in underpinning the support of the Chamar poor. This last claim, it may be noted, sets this study apart from literature arguing that ethnic parties secure material empowerment only for ethnic elites, and that the ethnic poor vote for these parties on the basis of the symbolic empowerment they derive from the economic ascendancy of elite coethnics.[7]

The material rationale underlying the Chamar poor's support for the BSP has varied across Uttar Pradesh. In the West, where Chamar labour have made the transition from the agrarian to the industrial sector, and started educating their young, a few amongst them have met with success in the competition over SC quotas, and landed government jobs. This has triggered expectations that the BSP's strict implementation of reservations would bring more such jobs the way of the Chamar poor in future, provided they kept up the focus on education, and sent their children to school. In the East, where the vast majority of Chamar labour still earn their living as farm hands, and remain illiterate, expectations have revolved around land instead. The BSP, of course, has played a part in raising these expectations ; its efforts to distribute land to agricultural labour, and crack down on the illegal occupation of plots belonging to subalterns by upper castes, undertaken in the teeth of vicious opposition, have raised hopes that it would push a still harder land agenda when it formed a government all on its own.

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[7] For a discussion of this literature, see Chapter 2.

In both the East and West, then, Chamar labour's support for the BSP has rested less on material benefits actually secured during past BSP rule, than on those expected from future BSP governments. The Chamar poor have thus delivered the BSP a trust-based vote, that has hinged on the belief that the party would deliver the goods when circumstances better permitted it to do so. This belief has arisen on the basis of two separate convictions : (1) that the BSP remains committed to their material empowerment ; and (2) that it has been hindered by a variety of factors from delivering on this commitment so far, that it is not a lack of political will per se, but rather, unfavourable political circumstances, that has accounted for the lag.

It is the BSP's determination to press ahead with its land agenda, despite the fierce resistance mounted by upper castes (whose tactics have extended beyond physical intimidation, to the actual murder, of party cadres), that has persuaded Chamar labour that the party has a material vision for the landless poor, and is prepared to make the sacrifices necessary to achieve it. It is again, the opposition faced by the BSP from upper caste sections of the bureaucracy, and conservative coalition partners like the BJP, that has helped this constituency understand the gaps in the party's material performance. They have seen this opposition as having posed serious obstacles in the BSP's path ; by the same logic, Chamar labour has expected the BSP to perform unhindered, once it had a majority of its own. Trust-based voting, in other words, has arisen from the Chamar poor's witnessing, at first-hand, the efforts the party has made, and the resistance it has encountered ; because trust has followed an assessment of the BSP as trustworthy, it has effectively ruled out "elite-manipulation" theories of ethnic voting.

The material benefits around which voter expectations have hinged, it may also be noted, have had little to do with patronage, to be delivered by individual legislators to their coethnic constituents. These benefits have rather pertained to the implementation of job quotas and the distribution of land, policy issues that the Chamar poor have expected BSP governments to address, and from which ensuing policy action they have hoped to benefit, the caste background of their legislators notwithstanding. Patronage, together with dignity gains accruing from coethnic representation, has become increasingly irrelevant as a factor driving Chamar voting in the BSP's multiethnic phase ; the party's nomination of non-*bahujan*, or at least,

non-Chamar candidates in most non-reserved seats has made prospects of patronage bleak for Chamars,[8] as legislators have favoured their "own" caste communities while delivering gains. With expectations of future policy benefits being fuelled by those already delivered by the party to its Chamar base, the BSP has defied expectations, common in the literature, that ethnic parties will mobilize on the basis of patronage alone.[9]

Chamars have supported the BSP in the post-1996 phase, then, at a certain cost to themselves. They have sacrificed both the coethnic representation and ensuing patronage that was available to them earlier ; Chamar agricultural labour have, additionally, put up with the burdens of being represented by landed castes, who have used their clout as legislators to protect coethnics guilty of crimes against SCs, particularly those employed on their fields. The Chamar decision to bear the costs of non-Chamar nominations, I argue, has played a crucial role in enabling the BSP to transform itself into a multiethnic party. For it is only because Chamars have supported BSP candidates irrespective of caste that these candidates have done well electorally. Other caste constituencies, particularly in Western Uttar Pradesh, have voted for the BSP only when it has nominated coethnics ; their support, moreover, has been split between the BSP and other parties even in the event of coethnic nominations, rendering it insufficient on its own to clinch victory. It is, again, the committed Chamar vote that has made BSP tickets so attractive to non-*bahujan* politicians in the first place ; this vote has been seen as a cushion against failure, or at least, abject electoral humiliation, by those weighing the risks of joining a low caste party.

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[8] The Indian Constitution requires states to reserve a certain number of parliamentary and state assembly constituencies for SCs and STs, with members of these communities alone being eligible to contest elections from these seats. The term "non-reserved seats" thus refers to those constituencies where "General" category, ie. non-SC/ST, candidates remain eligible to receive tickets. The Constitution further requires the proportion of reserved constituencies in each state to reflect the proportion of the SC/ST population therein. Reserved constituencies are also, in theory, supposed to have a high proportion of SCs/STs. But in reality, SCs/STs often find themselves in a minority in constituencies reserved for them, with non-reserved constituencies sometimes having high SC/ST populations. This is on account of the lag that prevents the reservation status of constituencies from being reviewed following every new Census.

[9] I discuss the literature tying ethnic parties to patronage politics in Chapter 2.

The BSP, for its part, has remained supremely mindful of the debt it has owed its Chamar base. The party has thus taken care to deliver Chamars programmatic gains to the greatest extent possible, within the limits imposed by its coalitions with the BJP. This has reassured Chamars that the party remains committed to their cause, and that it will pursue that cause more fully in future, when faced with more enabling political circumstances. The BSP has also signalled its commitment to prioritizing Chamars in the delivery of policy benefits through the instalment of Mayawati, a Chamar, at the helm of the party, and her repeated appointment as head of BSP governments. That the party has set a high political value on the guarantee of programmatic benefits to Chamars has further been evident from Mayawati's own announcement in 2006 that a Chamar would succeed her as party head, in the event of her death.[10]

The above analysis suggests that an ethnic base's willingness to bear the costs of multiethnic transformations could be a crucial factor determining the success of transformatory attempts ; the base's reluctance on this count could hold an ethnic party hostage to its original constituency, forcing it to live with a narrow base, and the low electoral competitiveness resulting from it. The case of the BSP, thus, offers an important counterpoint to the understandings of multiethnic transformations prevailing in the literature, that emphasize either sociological factors (ethnic groups that are in conflict in society cannot be accommodated within the same ethnic party) or the internal organizational structure of ethnic parties (parties with centralized rules of intraparty advancement find it difficult to accommodate new elites, whereas parties with competitive rules are better able to do so).[11] The BSP's case suggests that warring constituencies (in this case, landed castes and landless agricultural labour) can be accommodated within the same party. It also speaks to the second line of explanation, which assumes that old and new ethnic constituencies necessarily seek the same kind of benefits, namely, coethnic representation and patronage. The BSP's experience, on the contrary, implies that this might not always be the case.

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[10] "A Chamar will be my Successor : Mayawati," *Hindu*, August 29, 2006.
[11] For a discussion of both bodies of literature, see Chapter 2.

While Chamars have given up patronage and coethnic representation for programmatic gains, the BSP's non-*bahujan* constituencies have done exactly the opposite ; they have settled for patronage and coethnic nominations, but have received no programmatic benefits. This latter bargain has been facilitated by the crisis of coethnic representation that upper caste constituencies have faced in Uttar Pradesh since the mid-1990s, following the demise first, of the Congress, and then, of the BJP, the two parties that have traditionally accommodated upper castes within their ranks. The late 1990s have thus seen the two main upper caste constituencies in the state, Brahmins and Thakurs, drift to the BSP and SP respectively ; their mutual antagonism has prevented them from seeking out the same party, which has helped party politics in Uttar Pradesh gravitate towards a two-party system, with this trend being especially marked from the mid-2000s onwards.

The BSP's treatment of non-Chamar *bahujans* has been different from its treatment of both Chamars and non-*bahujan* castes. Non-Chamar *bahujans* have been, in a sense, the BSP's most pampered constituency ; they have had the best of both worlds, receiving the patronage and coethnic representation denied to Chamars, as well as the programmatic benefits denied to upper castes. The rationale underlying this privileged treatment has been simple, namely, the BSP's founding mission of forging a plebeian political coalition, or *bahujan samaj*. The BSP has nominated non-*bahujans* precisely because *bahujan* communities, with the exception of Chamars, have denied it committed support, voting for the party only when it has nominated coethnics, but not otherwise. The understanding here has been that the BSP would have to deliver programmatic benefits to non-Chamar *bahujans* before it can win them over, and forge a *bahujan* alliance, but to do this, the party would first have to form the government, and do whatever it takes to capture power (nominate non-*bahujans*, or ally with upper caste parties).

It follows from this that the BSP has treated its various caste constituencies asymmetrically, not only in the sense of offering each a different mix of benefits, but also in the more fundamental sense of using one, ie. non-*bahujans*, to unite the others, and forge a political coalition in which that first non-subaltern constituency might arguably, in the long term, have no place. For their part, the BSP's constituencies have also treated the party in a disparate fashion. While Chamars have voted for the

BSP on a partisan basis, the other constituencies have not, choosing to reserve their support for coethnic candidates nominated by the party, though *bahujan* castes in the East have come closer to delivering the party the committed vote that it has sought. The case of the BSP, thus, encourages a rethinking of party-society ties, which are generally assumed to involve similar relations of give and take between a party and its different constituencies.

The subject of party-society ties brings me to my last argument, which pertains to the differential success the BSP has had in forging *bahujan* unity in Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh. The root of this difference lies in the nature of the party's relationship with its Chamar base in the two regions, and its impact on the BSP's ability to secure committed support from non-Chamar *bahujans*. The BSP remains more deeply embedded in the Uttar Pradesh countryside than any other party in the state, with Chamar cadres present and active in practically every village. These ties have benefitted the party a great deal, particularly when it has come to the liberation of the SC franchise. Vigilant Chamar cadres, on the lookout for opportunities to strike pragmatic bargains, have promised SC votes to non-*bahujan* candidates running for positions in *panchayats* (institutions of local self-governance), obtaining a guarantee that SCs would be able to vote freely in parliamentary and state assembly elections, in return. But the numerical predominance of Chamars at the grassroots, and their political predominance in *panchayats,* has also disadvantaged the BSP, particularly in the West.

The vast majority of Chamars active in *panchayat* politics have been BSP cadres ; as such, their privileging of coethnics over other SCs in the distribution of programme benefits in Western Uttar Pradesh has served to alienate non-Chamar SC communities from the party here. The West has also seen Chamars punish other subalterns for the burdens they have suffered under non-Chamar *bahujan* legislators, oppose the BSP's nomination of non-Chamar SCs in reserved constituencies, and engage in communal mobilization against Muslims, a *bahujan* constituency the BSP has strenuously tried to court. Chamars in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, in contrast, have nurtured more inclusive conceptions of subaltern community, and related to the BSP in a less proprietary way. Chamar-dominant *panchayats* in the East have distributed

benefits fairly between coethnics and others ; furthermore, in those cases where Chamar legislators have delivered patronage to coethnic constituents in reserved constituencies here, they have usually taken care to secure benefits for other subalterns as well. Chamars have also, despite facing considerably greater provocation, refrained from adopting communal attitudes towards Muslims, and rioting against the community, unlike in the West.

Thus, while remaining equally tied to its Chamar base in both regions, the consequences of "embeddedness" have been different for the BSP in Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh. In the West, its ties to Chamars have prevented the party from catering to other subalterns ; in the East, in contrast, these ties have not had such a debilitating effect. This suggests that it is not embeddedness per se (which makes party elites responsive to the visions of the rank and file), that leads parties to move in democratic directions ; it is, rather, the conceptions of political community prevailing at the base which determines whether or not embedded parties will aid democratization.[12] Where these visions are narrow and circumscribed, as amongst Chamars in Western Uttar Pradesh, its societal ties may well prevent a party from expanding its subaltern base, and empowering a larger subaltern constituency.

The question will now arise as to why Chamars in the East and West subscribe to different notions of plebeian community. The immediate answer would point to the extent of the socio-economic gap between Chamar labour and other sections of the subaltern poor ; this gap remains less marked in the East, where both communities continue to remain engaged in the agrarian sector, and earn their living as farm hands. In contrast, Chamar labour have moved out of the agricultural sector in the West, thereby achieving more economic mobility than other subaltern castes, which has led them to conceive of themselves as more industrious, and hence, more deserving of the rewards of BSP rule.

As to what explains this variation in economic behaviour, the answer would require us to examine the different trajectories that economic development and political mobilization has taken in the two regions in the post-independence period. The variation in these trajectories has had some significant consequences, bringing

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[12] The literature tying embedded parties, as well as states, to democratization, is discussed in Chapter 2.

the Chamar poor in Western Uttar Pradesh more economic opportunities, and forging an inclination towards a politics of quotas and economic mobility amongst Chamars here, as opposed to a politics of land and economic justice, which has dominated the landscape in the East.[13] While this thesis does not dwell on these processes at length, it recognizes that examining them might help us arrive at a historically deeper understanding of why *bahujan* unity has been easier for the BSP to forge in some areas, relative to others. In that sense, such an examination could provide us a useful reminder that once identities take root, they might prove less susceptible to tampering by political actors than most constructivist analyses of identity-formation suggest.

4. Definitions

Ethnic Party

I borrow Kanchan Chandra's definition of an "ethnic party" as one "that overtly represents itself as a champion of the cause" of an ethnic group, or a set of ethnic groups "to the exclusion of others, and that makes such a representation central to its strategy of mobilizing voters." As Chandra argues, an ethnic party has three key features : (1) it mobilizes groups defined on the basis of ascriptive characteristics ; (2) it resorts to mobilizing ethnic "insider" groups by excluding ethnic "outsiders" ; and (3) "while the party may also highlight other issues," its championing the cause of an ethnic group or groups remains "central to its mobilizing efforts." [14]

Multiethnic Party

The crucial feature distinguishing an ethnic from a "multiethnic party" is that an ethnic party, while mobilizing its target constituency, always identifies an excluded

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[13] The greater economic mobility amongst Chamars in the West may be understood in terms of the faster pace of industrialization this region has witnessed, compared to the East. The stress on quotas, on the other hand, is a legacy of the upliftment efforts of the 1920s, which inculcated an awareness of education as a road to material improvement, thereby creating a market for reservations amongst lower castes. Mobilization in the East, in contrast, revolved around peasant resistance to landlords in the 1920s, paving the way for communist mobilization of agricultural labour in post-independent India.

[14] Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*, 3.

ethnic "other," whereas a multiethnic party, "while also invoking ethnic identities, does not exclude any group on the salient dimension(s) of ethnicity." "The main distinction between an ethnic and a multiethnic party, therefore, lies not in the number of categories that each attempts to *include*, but in whether or not there is a category that each attempts to *exclude*." [15]

Multiethnic Transformation

"Multiethnic transformation" refers to the process whereby an ethnic party changes over into a multiethnic party, by appealing to, and effectively mobilizing, those ethnic constituencies it had excluded earlier on, even as it continues to draw support from its core ethnic base.

Asymmetric Representation

Borrowing from Samuel H. Barnes, I see "mobilization" as referring to the establishment of party-society linkages, and "representation" as referring to the quality of those linkages. Representation, thus, pertains to the normative aspect of mobilization[16] ; it measures the extent to which a party succeeds in fulfilling the aspirations of its supporters, in delivering them the goods, material and/or psychological, that they demand.

I define "asymmetric representation" as a situation in which a party offers each of the various constituencies making up its support base (where these constituencies may be differentiated on the basis of class, or ascriptive criteria) a different mix of benefits (clientelistic, programmatic, or a combination of both) in a way that leaves it addressing their aspirations unevenly, and fulfilling those of some constituencies better than others. Asymmetric representation, thus, not only involves a party's treating its constituencies differently, but also it's discriminating amongst them, i.e. privileging one constituency, or a set of constituencies, over the rest.

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[15] Ibid., 4 -5,
[16] Samuel H. Barnes, *Representation in Italy : Institutionalized Tradition and Electoral Choice* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1977) 4 -5.

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"Material empowerment" refers to economic empowerment. "Symbolic empowerment," on the other hand, refers to dignity gains. In the context of this specific study, "symbolic empowerment" refers to dignity gains that have accrued to *bahujans* from the BSP's capture of the state, as well as from the election of coethnic candidates nominated by the party. It is through three separate avenues that the BSP's capture of the state has secured dignity gains for *bahujan* communities :
(1) the cooperative and respectful attitudes of government agents during BSP rule ;
(2) the BSP's strict implementation of the SC/ST Act ; and (3) the commemoration of the "glorious" history of *bahujans,* and their contribution to the life of the nation, achieved through the marking of public space and institutions with a *bahujan* character. The fourth source of dignity gains has been coethnic representation, which has depended on the victory of individual candidates nominated by the BSP, rather than the BSP's capture of the state as a whole. I use the term "symbolic empowerment" to refer to all four categories of dignity gains ; when referring to the fourth category alone, I use the term "coethnic representation." The terms "symbolic empowerment," "psychological empowerment," and "dignity gains" are used interchangeably in this study.

Ethnic Poor

Bahujan communities, despite their subaltern status vis-à-vis upper castes, sometimes admit of class distinctions within. This is especially true of SCs, amongst whom there is a burgeoning middle class. This study concerns itself with poorer sections of *bahujans,* and *bahujan* labour, in particular, and uses the term "ethnic poor" to refer to these constituencies.

Embeddedness

"Embeddedness" refers to the quality of being rooted in society, or being closely tied to societal actors. Thus, an "embedded" party is one whose various tiers

are linked by channels that allow for the flow of communication upwards, so that the party leadership remains aware of the aspirations, critiques and visions reigning at the different levels, and particularly at the base.

5. Methodology
5.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

Choice of Regions

This thesis studies the BSP in Uttar Pradesh during the period 1984 - 2004. It looks at the BSP in four districts, Meerut and Muzaffarnagar in Western Uttar Pradesh, and Jaunpur and Azamgarh in the East. Uttar Pradesh remains divided into four geographical regions : Western, Central, Southern and Eastern.[17] Fieldwork was conducted in Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh specifically, for the following reasons :

1. The West and the East provide the most effective contrast when it comes to the economic situation of the Chamar poor, which remains starkly different in these two parts. The West is the most industrialized and urbanized of the four regions, offering labour the greatest opportunity to shift out of the agrarian sector. The reverse is true of the East ; this is the least industrialized and urbanized part of the state, providing agricultural labour few openings to effect an economic transition.[18] Over and above the dissimilar economic circumstances facing Chamar labour in the two regions, the different trajectories of political mobilization in the East and

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[17] The Hill region, comprising the Himalayan districts of the North and the foothills, was also a part of Uttar Pradesh till November 2000, when it was, together with the western district of Hardwar, reconstituted into the new state of Uttaranchal.

[18] The regional figures provided by Ajit Kumar Singh in his *Uttar Pradesh Development Report 2000* show the rural population percentage to be lowest for the Western, and highest for the Eastern region, ie. 73.70 percent and 88.40 percent respectively, the corresponding figures for the Central and Southern regions being 76.37 percent and 78.70 percent. Again, while the Western region has the highest number of registered factories for every population of 100,000 (9.2), the Eastern region has the lowest (1.6), the figures for the Central and Southern regions being 5.9 and 1.9 respectively. See Ajit Kumar Singh, *Uttar Pradesh Development Report 2000* (Lucknow : New Royal Book Company, 2001), 95-6, 109-10.

West have also made for a contrast in political culture, giving rise to widely divergent material priorities and communitarian understandings amongst Chamars. These differences have informed the rationale underlying Chamar labour's support for the BSP, their attitudes towards other subaltern communities, and the BSP's success in forging subaltern unity, all of which have varied significantly in these two parts.

2. The West and the East also provide a contrast in terms of caste make-up ; whereas it is upper castes (Brahmins and Thakurs) who comprise the vast majority of large landholders in the East, it is upper backwards (Jats and Gujjars) who occupy this position in the West. Focusing on the East and West thus allows us to examine how the consequences of BSP rule for *bahujans* have differed, depending on whether it is OBCs or upper castes who occupy positions of dominance in the countryside. It may be noted here that it is in Western Uttar Pradesh alone that OBCs dominate the landowning strata ; while backward communities like Yadavs and Kurmis own land all over the state, they remain subordinate to upper castes (in particular, Thakurs) in the landowning hierarchy in the other three regions.

Choice of Districts

I now briefly discuss the choice of fieldwork districts. Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts were chosen as fieldsites because they fit the profile of the stereotypical Western district well. Both districts lie in the heart of the sugarcane belt that has brought Western Uttar Pradesh its prosperity ; it is sugarcane farming that has propelled industrialization in this region, the majority of factories here being sugar mills, cane-crushing and sugar-packing plants. These districts not only meet this particular industrial profile, but also the demographic profile characteristic of the West, namely, a farming community dominated by OBCs, ie. Jats and Gujjars, employing agricultural labour drawn from lower backward and SC groups, with Chamar labour, however, having increasingly shifted out to the industrial sector since the early 1990s.

Jaunpur and Azamgarh, my fieldwork districts in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, likewise, typify the features of this region. The predominance of subsistence crops (such as paddy and wheat) over cash crops (such as sugarcane) has stifled opportunities for the growth of agro-based industries in the East, with the failure of industrialization in general not having helped the situation. Paddy and wheat are the staples of agricultural production in Jaunpur and Azamgarh, which has translated into very few openings in industrial employment for the labouring class, most of whom continue to earn their living as farm hands. These districts also pit agricultural labour, of whom Chamars form the vast majority, against upper caste farmers, mainly from Hindu, but sometimes also from Muslim communities, in a way typical of the region at large. For backward castes, while owning land, do not trump upper castes when it comes to the size of holdings in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, which makes upper caste communities, more than backwards, the main employers of Chamar labour.

Choice of Constituencies

From each of the four districts mentioned above, one state assembly constituency was chosen, and fieldwork conducted in one village in each constituency. The constituencies representing Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts were Hastinapur and Morna respectively, while those representing Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts were Jaunpur and Saraimir.[19] Hastinapur and Saraimir were reserved constituencies, which meant that of the two constituencies making up the Western and Eastern samples each, one was a reserved seat, and the other non-reserved. This coupling of a reserved with a non-reserved seat in each region was designed to facilitate the following :

1. A comparison of the voting behaviour of Chamars in reserved and non-reserved settings, with the BSP nominating non-SCs in non-reserved constituencies, and limiting Chamar nominations to reserved

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[19] A detailed explanation as to why these particular assembly constituencies were chosen over others is provided in Chapters 4 and 5.

constituencies, during its multiethnic phase. Such a comparison was crucial to our establishing that Chamars vote for all BSP candidates, irrespective of caste, and not just for coethnic candidates nominated by the party.

2. An examination of the voting behaviour of non-Chamar *bahujans*, and non-*bahujans*, in reserved seats, where the BSP does not award tickets to their coethnics, and in non-reserved seats, where it does. This examination established that non-*bahujans* do not generally vote for the BSP except when it nominates coethnics, and that while non-Chamar *bahujan* support tends to be driven by the coethnic factor in the West, a significant section of non-Chamar *bahujans* deliver the BSP a partisan vote in the East.

3. A comparison of the costs borne by Chamars for supporting the BSP in reserved and non-reserved constituencies. It emerged that Chamars have sacrificed both coethnic representation and patronage, and put up with the burdens of being represented by landed castes (where they have been nominated, and elected) in non-reserved seats. They have, in contrast, benefitted from coethnic representation (where Chamar candidates have emerged victorious) in reserved seats. But Chamar MLAs (Members of Legislative Assembly) have not reserved patronage for coethnic constituents alone in reserved constituencies ; where their victory has, in part, depended on non-Chamar votes, they have spread the benefits around, even taking Chamar support for granted, and overlooking this constituency, in the manner of non-*bahujan* legislators, on occasion.

Choice of Villages

I now lay out the research design adopted within each assembly constituency. A main village and three subsidiary villages were selected within each assembly segment, the subsidiary villages being used to verify trends emerging from fieldwork in the main village. The criteria governing the selection of the villages were threefold :

1. They had to be representative of the districts concerned in terms of caste make-up, and allow for the presence of (a) Chamars, and, at least, one other SC community ; (b) regionally dominant castes, ie. upper castes in the East, and upper backwards in the West ; and (c) some non-SC subalterns, ie. lower backwards, whether Hindu or Muslim. The presence of subaltern castes on the one hand, and dominant castes on the other, facilitated an assessment of the impact of BSP rule on pre-existing relations of domination and subordination in the countryside. The presence of Chamars, non-Chamar SCs, and non-SC *bahujans*, again, permitted an examination of intra-SC and intra-*bahujan* dynamics, as shaped by BSP governments, and of the often varying responses of these constituencies to the BSP. This criterion was most rigorously applied in the selection of the main villages.

2. Need for a cross-region comparison of Ambedkar villages, ie. villages that had benefitted from the Ambedkar Village Programme (AVP). The AVP, named after the SC leader B.R. Ambedkar, had been a pet project of BSP governments, and had used by the latter to channel development funds to villages with substantial SC populations. On account of the political predominance of Chamars in most SC- majority villages, and hence, most Ambedkar villages, such a comparison helped examine how Chamars had distributed AVP benefits in the East and West, ie. whether they had funnelled benefits to coethnics alone, or distributed them equitably amongst all SC groups. This, in turn, helped examine the attitudes held by Chamars towards other subalterns, and the differences in these attitudes across East and West. Two of the villages studied in the West were Ambedkar villages, as were two of those studied in the East.

3. Practical considerations, such as commutability : the villages had to lie within daily commuting distance of my base in the field. In Hastinapur and Morna constituencies, I had set up base in the town of Mawana, and the village of Morna, respectively. In Jaunpur and Saraimir constituencies, I operated out of the towns of Jaunpur and Saraimir.

Accordingly, the main fieldwork villages chosen in the West were Alipura, in Hastinapur constituency, and Dalki, in Morna constituency. In the East, the main fieldwork villages were Dehri, in Jaunpur constituency, and Baraipar, in Saraimir constituency. The subsidiary fieldsites were : the villages of Bhoolni, Naiwala and Rampuri in Hastinapur ; the villages of Mansurpur, Ala Heri, and Patewa in Morna ; the villages of Dumri, Bashi, and Dadra in Jaunpur ; and the villages of Sakatpur, Thara and Malari in Saraimir.[20]

5.2. SAMPLE SELECTION

This study draws on interviews with voters, and party workers, the latter belonging both to the BSP and other parties. I lay out the guidelines directing the selection of voter and party worker samples in this section.

Voter Sample

The sample of voters interviewed in each of the main villages comprised 7 percent of the votes in that village. This effectively translated into 64 interviews in Alipura, 108 in Dalki, 163 in Dehri, and 70 in Baraipar, bringing the total to 405. For each village, 50 percent of the sample comprised SCs, 25 percent upper castes and upper backwards, and the other 25 percent lower backwards. Muslims (for whom caste is a lived reality, their religious precepts notwithstanding) fell into the latter two categories, where they were present.[21] The SC samples were deliberately skewed in favour of Chamars, and the SC poor ; Chamars constituted 70 percent of the SC samples, and the SC poor 90 percent. The upper caste and upper backward samples over-represented regionally dominant castes. The lower backward samples, likewise, over-represented locally preponderant communities, and poorer sections. The SC and lower backward samples tended to be more balanced in terms of gender ; women from lower castes were both more politicized and willing to talk. While a good part (60-70 percent) of each sample was made up of respondents

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[20] The names of both the main and subsidiary villages have been altered. I explain why in section 5.4.
[21] Lower castes amongst Muslims all fall in the OBC, not SC, category.

picked at random, I followed leads provided by cadres, both from the BSP and other parties, in choosing the remaining interviewees.

No more than 10-15 respondents were interviewed in each of the subsidiary fieldsites. These samples were not designed to represent caste groups resident in these villages. The purpose of these interviews was to confirm findings generated in the main village ; the respondents were, thus, people who had close empirical knowledge of the issues, as they had played themselves out in these sites.

Party Worker Sample

The BSP party worker sample in each assembly constituency included, first and foremost, BSP cadres based in the main village, as well as in the subsidiary villages. In each constituency, the total number of cadres interviewed in the four fieldwork villages ranged between 20-25. The BSP had, for reasons of organizational efficiency, divided each state assembly constituency into 20 sectors. The sample for each constituency covered 5 of these 20 sectors, 1 of these 5 being the sector within which the main village, and subsidiary villages, lay. 6-8 cadres were interviewed from each of the 4 remaining sectors. Interviews were also conducted with the members of the committee in charge of the assembly constituency, that supervised the 20 sectors. Beyond the assembly constituency, members of the relevant district party committee also formed part of the BSP sample.

The BAMCEF (Backward and Minority Community Employees Federation), an association of lower caste government employees, founded by Kanshi Ram in 1973, had provided the BSP "with its initial base of cadres, and considerable infrastructural support" [22] in the year following its birth. But the BAMCEF split in 1985 over the issue of the BSP's formation, with one faction supporting Kanshi Ram's decision to float a political party, and the other opposing it. Following the split, Kanshi Ram dissolved the organization, with the faction loyal to him, however, continuing to operate as a shadow force, with no existence on paper. This shadow BAMCEF has played a key role in masterminding the BSP's strategies in the post-

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[22] Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*, 145.

1985 period. The sample thus included key BAMCEF personnel active in the relevant assembly constituency and district.

The nature of my research questions called for the BSP party worker sample to be biased in favour of grassroots political actors ; as such, state level party officials did not feature as prominently in it as cadres operating at the level of the district and below. Like the voter sample, the party worker sample included Chamars, non-Chamar SCs, non-SC *bahujans*, as well as non-*bahujans* ; if Chamars featured more prominently in the sample relative to other castes, this was because they were the most active in the lower reaches of the party organization.

Cadres active in the other major parties in the state, ie. the SP, BJP, and Congress, were also interviewed, though these samples were much smaller, ie. limited to 10 cadres per party, for each fieldwork district. The BSP's growth had largely occurred at the expense of the Congress and the BJP ; the BSP had furthermore, to the extent that it had alienated upper castes from the BJP, and driven them towards the SP and itself, helped buttress the SP's position in the state. Thus, cadres from the SP, BJP, and Congress had interesting perspectives to offer on the BSP's rise, and multiethnic transformation, and its impact on their organizations, and on the Uttar Pradesh polity as a whole. The cadre samples for these three parties included party personnel active at the level of the assembly constituency, and to a lesser extent, the district. Parties other than the BSP had only a thin presence at the village level ; where SP, BJP, and Congress cadres happened to be present in my fieldwork villages, they were interviewed as well.

5.3. SOURCES

For information regarding voter motivations, interviews were the most important source. My arguments vis-a-vis voter motivations also drew on data pertaining to the BSP's policy performance, specifically : (1) data pertaining to the distribution of land, gathered at the level of the village, the *tehsil* (district subdivision), the district, and the state, and provided by the *patwari* (village land records keeper), the *tehsildar* (subdivisional district magistrate, responsible for the administration of the *tehsil*), the District Land Records Clerk, and the State Revenue Board,

respectively ; (2) data pertaining to government jobs secured through quotas by residents in my fieldwork villages, gathered through interviews with villagers ; and (3) data pertaining to the distribution of AVP benefits in my fieldsites, gathered through interviews with the Village Development Officer, and villagers concerned. Information pertaining to the difficulties faced by the BSP as it pursued its policy agenda, was obtained through interviews, not only with voters, but also with government officials at various levels of the state.

Interviews were also the paramount source when it came to the perspectives of BSP actors, and those of other parties. BSP perspectives were also gleaned from : (1) speeches delivered by BSP leaders at election rallies, and party meetings, that I attended ; (2) interviews with BSP politicians published in news magazines and newspapers ; and (3) academic literature citing BSP actors.

My analysis also relies on data pertaining to the caste profile of fieldwork districts and assembly constituencies, as well as the caste-wise distribution of population/votes therein ; since neither the Census nor the Election Commission in India provides caste-based figures,[23] this data was obtained from BSP personnel active in the relevant fieldwork units. Data pertaining to the caste profile of fieldwork villages, and the caste-wise distribution of votes there, was obtained, on the other hand, from incumbent *pradhans* (heads of village *panchayats*), who having fought elections in these venues, could provide a reliable caste count. Data pertaining to the caste-background of BSP candidates was drawn jointly from Election Commission Reports and BSP offices ; the former supplied the names of the candidates, while the latter identified their caste.

Finally, my account engages throughout with the academic literature on ethnic mobilization, caste politics, and the BSP.

5.4. PROTECTION OF RESPONDENTS

The sensitive nature of the information divulged by respondents in course of interviews, and the possibility of interviewees, especially those from lower castes,

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[23] The Census of India provides figures for the SC, ST, and General, ie. non-SC/ST, categories. But it does not provide data for the various sub-castes within SCs, or even for OBCs, who are subsumed within the General category.

coming to harm, made it imperative that their identities be kept confidential. This stricture applied no less to party workers than to voters. And while some party workers (officials active at the level of the constituency and the district) were less vulnerable to pressures from dominant castes than others (village-level cadres), they needed protection just the same, owing to the delicate nature of their disclosures, which provided a glimpse into the inner workings of the BSP, workings that could not be gleaned from official party positions. The identities of BAMCEF officials, too, had to be kept confidential, since many of them are in active government service, and not allowed affiliation to a political party by law. Government officials working in the lower tiers of the state remained just as susceptible to security threats as other grassroots respondents ; higher level officials, on the other hand, were more worried about the sanctity of their jobs, under BSP rule, or alternatively, under non-BSP governments, depending on what they had said.

Thus, respondents remain largely anonymous in this study, except in the few cases where they granted me permission to reveal their names. The names of my main and subsidiary fieldwork villages have also been altered, with all other fieldwork units retaining their authentic names.

6. Limitations of Study

This thesis, being both a case study and an ethnographic account, falls short when it comes to the issues of representativeness and generalizability. In this section, I briefly discuss the challenges that single case study research and ethnography pose to broad theorizing, while at the same time exploring the particular place they occupy within the explanatory exercise as a whole. I argue that this study illustrates the limits of these methodologies, while also demonstrating their strengths.

6.1. THE SINGLE CASE STUDY AND THEORY DEVELOPMENT

Robert K. Yin defines a case study as "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." The case

study method, in other words, seeks to "cover contextual conditions – believing that they might be highly pertinent to … [the] phenomenon of study." [24] It follows from their treatment of context as explanation that case researchers do not understand their cases as being "directly 'representative' of diverse populations" ; it is for this same reason that they may be seen as sacrificing theoretical "parsimony and broad applicability" for "contingent generalizations … with a high degree of explanatory richness." [25] Case studies also serve poorly as a method of refuting or confirming theory, since "one is unlikely to reject a hypothesis, or to consider it definitively proved, on the basis of a single case." [26] As such, for those who emphasize the epistemic goal of hypothesis testing" above all else, the single case study has practically no theoretical utility.[27]

But theory development cannot proceed without the formation of new hypotheses ; similarly, the pruning of existing theory remains crucial to the refinement of our generalizations. When it comes to generating new conjectures, or finetuning established relationships, no other form of enquiry does as good a job as case study research. Thus, Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett argue that "case studies have powerful advantages in the heuristic identification of new variables and hypotheses through the study of deviant or outlier cases … When a case study researcher asks a participant 'Were you thinking X when you did Y,' and gets the answer, 'No, I was thinking Z,' then if the researcher had not thought of Z as a causally relevant variable, she may have a new variable demanding to be heard. [Thus], [t]he popular refrain that observations are theory-laden does not mean that they are theory-determined." [28]

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[24] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research : Design and Methods* (California : Sage, 2003), 13. Yin, driving his point home, argues that an experiment, in contrast, "deliberately divorces a phenomenon from its context, so that attention can be focused on only a few variables." Again, a history, while dealing "with the entangled situation between phenomenon and context," concerns itself "usually with *non*contemporary events." Finally, "surveys can try to deal with phenomenon and context, but their ability to investigate the context is extremely limited." Yin, 13.

[25] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge : MIT Press, 2005), 31.

[26] John Gerring, *Case Study Research : Principles and Practices* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2007), 42.

[27] George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, 12. The reference here is to Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, who prioritize theory testing over all other aspects of theory development in their book, *Designing Social Inquiry : Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1994).

[28] Ibid., 20-21.

The reason why case studies are able to capture new variables is that they "examine the operation of causal mechanisms in individual cases in detail. Within a single case, we can look at a large number of intervening variables and inductively observe any unexpected aspects of the operation of a particular causal mechanism or help identify what conditions present in a case activate the causal mechanism." [29] "[C]ase study research [thus] allows for the generation of a great number of hypotheses, insights that might not be apparent to the cross-case researcher who works with a thinner set of empirical data across a large number of cases and with a more determinate (fixed) definition of cases, variables, and outcomes." " It is," in other words, "the very fuzziness of case studies that grants them an advantage in research at an exploratory stage." [30]

The present study suffers from the generalizability deficit characteristic of the case study method. But its grounded analysis also calls for the adjustment of some established generalizations pertaining to ethnic parties, and voter motivations. This analysis suggests : (1) that the relationship between ethnic parties and patronage politics does not hold as tightly as is usually theorized, and that ethnic parties may mobilize on the basis of programmatic politics in some developing contexts ; (2) that the success of multiethnic transformations need not always depend on a party's ability to simultaneously satisfy old and new ethnic constituencies, both of whom demand coethnic representation and patronage benefits from it, and that the old ethnic base may at times prove willing to sacrifice these gains to accommodate new groups ; and (3) that electoral support may rest, not merely on the past performance of parties, but also on future expectations that voters have of them, trust being a key factor nurturing such expectations. I lay out all three of these arguments in greater detail in Chapter 2.

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[29] Ibid., 21.
[30] Gerring, *Case Study Research*, 41.

Ethnography may be defined as "an approach that relies on person-to-person contact as a way to elicit insider perspectives and meanings." [31] While case study research often makes use of ethnography, the challenges that these two methods pose to abstract theorizing are distinct. Both case studies and ethnographies are understood as lacking external validity ; but while case studies are critiqued for their mining of context for explanations, ethnographies, on the other hand, are critiqued for the value they place on individual testimony. Thus, Edward Schatz argues that "[w]hat ultimately distinguishes the political ethnographer" is her belief in "truthful consciousness," as opposed to false consciousness, and her assumption that individual testimony "is worth mining for its truth- value." [32] The non-ethnographer, in contrast, "lacks faith in the veracity of individual-level accounts of political reality, and is likely to dismiss … [such] accounts as biased, unrepresentative, simply misinformed," and ultimately misleading.[33]

The ethnographer is also committed to generating knowledge *inductively* from the plethora of individual testimonies she hears in the field. It is this attentiveness to emic (ie. insider) perspectives that makes broad theorizing difficult for ethnographers, but as Schatz points out, the grounded explanations arising from ethnographic fieldwork can serve as a corrective to decontextualized theorizing, and work to keep the latter in check.[34]

Coming to the present study, its heavy reliance on ethnographic methods, and inductive use of ethnographic data, leads to shortcomings on the front of external validity. But it is precisely on account of its inductive use of ethnography that this study succeeds in providing a corrective perspective to existing theory. The following illustration makes this point clear.

Most of the literature on the BSP has seen the Chamar poor's support as resting on psychological grounds. Where the role of material motivations has been

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[31] Edward Schatz, "Methods are not Tools : Ethnography and the Limits of Multi-Methods Research" (Working Paper No. 12, Committee on Concepts and Methods, International Political Science Association, January 2007), 2.
[32] Ibid., 5.
[33] Ibid., 7.
[34] Ibid., 12.

recognized, these have been understood as revolving around patronage benefits.[35] The role of programmatic politics in clinching support, in other words, has been completely ignored. I argue that this has happened for the following reasons :

1. Rather than engaging with voters on an ethnographic basis, scholars have inferred voter motivations from accounts of party performance, derived from official BSP discourse, and media reports.[36] These sources have proved misleading, for two reasons : (a) the BSP has consistently emphasized its symbolic achievements, on account of the resistance its material policy efforts have encountered, which has caused material gains from BSP rule to be both uneven and reversible ; and (b) the upper caste bias of the media in Uttar Pradesh has led the press to subject Mayawati's symbolic excesses to persistent critique, while completely ignoring the party's material achievements ; this, needless to say, has caused the BSP to be firmly linked to a symbolic agenda in most media accounts.

2. Ethnography, where it has been used to study the BSP, has not served an inductive purpose ; it has, rather, been employed in the service of a deductive logic. It has been used, in other words, "to accomplish a 'process tracing'" linking the researcher's independent and dependent variables, variables that have been defined *prior to ethnographic research*. Research subjects, in such cases, have been "useful as founts of information to test" causal relationships established by the researcher *before hearing their testimony*.[37] This alone explains how Kanchan Chandra, for instance, overlooks the role played by programmatic politics in sustaining the support of the Chamar base following the BSP's multiethnic transformation, her use of ethnography notwithstanding. Chandra's argument that multiethnic transformations depend on ethnic parties delivering coethnic representation and patronage to old and new ethnic constituencies alike, does rest, in part, on voter interviews. But

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[35] For a discussion of the literature that explains Chamar support in psychological terms, and material motivations in terms of patronage, see Chapter 2.

[36] I engage with, and critique, this scholarship in Chapter 2.

[37] Schatz, "Methods are not Tools," 9-10.

voter testimonies cannot be understood as having *informed* Chandra's theory, for the simple reason that the BSP's nomination of non-*bahujans* forced vast sections of the Chamar base to sacrifice coethnic representation and patronage, a loss they were compensated for by the BSP's targeted delivery of programmatic benefits. Chandra misses this last fact because she approaches respondents with a view to confirm her own hypothesis, rather than use their testimonies to construct her analytical categories.

It is, thus, this study's use of "insider meanings to engage epistemic knowledge" that allows it to question "assumed causal relationships" and generate "alternative renderings of empirical reality." [38] To that extent, ethnography, even as it limits the applicability of the causal relationships discovered here, works also to make them serve a critical and interrogatory function.

7. Organization of the Study

Over and above this Introduction, this thesis has five other chapters. Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical argument, and shows how it addresses the existing literature. Chapter 3 situates the BSP in the larger context of caste mobilization in Uttar Pradesh, and explains why the party privileges the goal of psychological empowerment in its official discourse. It also argues that the BSP's electoral strategies have facilitated a shift from a psychological to a material politics over time, even as psychological issues have dominated the party's formal political agenda. Chapters 4 and 5 lay out the empirical argument ; while Chapter 4 shows how the ground realities in Western Uttar Pradesh bear out my theoretical claims, Chapter 5 does the same for Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Chapter 6 concludes by summarizing the main findings, and briefly analysing the BSP's politics in the post-2004 period. It also describes how this thesis points the way to future research ; referring to a few analogous empirical cases, it argues that the feasibility of these research agendas is supported by more than the BSP's politics alone.

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[38] Ibid., 11-12.

2

Theory

This chapter lays out the theoretical argument, and shows how it addresses the relevant theoretical literature. It is organized into three sections : Section 1 discusses the ethnic poor's reasons for voting for ethnic parties ; Section 2 discusses the dynamics underlying multiethnic transformations ; and Section 3 discusses the consequences embedded parties have for democratization.

Section 1 has three subsections. In the first subsection, I lay out a material theory of voter motivations, and critique some of the assumptions of psychological theories. In the second, I question "elite manipulation" perspectives, that interpret mass participation in ethnic politics in terms of the cynical and self-interested manipulation of the ethnic poor by ethnic elites. I argue that such perspectives leave no room for a theory of motivations, so far as the ethnic poor are concerned. They also overlook the role trust can play in sustaining future-oriented voting by the ethnic poor, where this constituency votes for benefits expected in the future, rather than those delivered in the past, with trust being engendered by voters' experience of past party rule. The third subsection elaborates on this trust-based account of voting, and carries the critique of elite manipulation theories still further. It argues that trust is a cognitive phenomenon, not unthinking belief, and that a cognitive understanding of trust places trust-driven political behaviour outside the purview of manipulation-centric explanations.

Section 2 has four subsections. The first subsection emphasizes the role of programmatic politics in the BSP's multiethnic transformation, and lays out the case for asymmetric representation. The second subsection, pointing to the role of programmatic politics, questions the assumption, common in the literature, that ethnic/multiethnic parties mobilize on the basis of patronage alone. The third subsection addresses the question : what determines the success of multiethnic transformations? It explores two prevalent understandings, the first of which

emphasizes extra-party sociological factors, and the second, intra-party organization, and argues that the BSP's case points to the plausibility of a third explanation, that focuses on the willingness of the party's core ethnic base to bear the costs of transformation, instead. The fourth subsection considers the argument that the willingness of the base to bear these costs, and to support the party despite the limited benefits delivered, is best explained by its powerlessness. It, however, refutes this explanation, arguing that the BSP's base is hardly powerless vis-à-vis the party, in that the BSP needs its base, as much as its base needs the BSP.

Section 3 discusses the repercussions of strong party-society ties for democracy. Taking issue with the literature that sees embedded parties, with deep roots in society, as ipso facto facilitating a democratic politics, it argues that rather than robust party-society ties per se, it is the visions reigning at the societal level, at the party's base, that determine whether or not embedded parties will facilitate democratization.

1. Voter Motivations and the Ethnic Poor
1.1. A CRITIQUE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

Horowitz's Theory of Psychological Motivations

As I stated in Chapter 1, the poorer section of Chamars, the sub-caste that constitutes the BSP's base, have received more psychological than material benefits from BSP rule. But this is not to say this constituency has supported the BSP for psychological reasons alone. Their support for the party has also rested on material grounds : to a lesser extent, the relatively scarce material benefits secured for them by BSP governments (the vast majority of these benefits having gone to the Chamar middle class), but much more significantly, the material benefits they have expected the party to bring them in future. This argument, which sees the Chamar poor as supporting the BSP for material, no less than symbolic, reasons, runs counter to the understanding, predominant in the literature, that the support provided to ethnic parties by poorer sections of ethnic constituencies rests on a psychological rationale alone.

This psychological theory of ethnic voting is best articulated by Donald L. Horowitz. Horowitz argues that in societies where "self-esteem is ... a function of the esteem accorded to groups," group worth is an issue of crucial importance. Thus, "the sources of ethnic conflict" in such societies "reside, above all," in the inter-group comparisons through which "the assessment of collective merit ... proceeds," and the "struggle for relative group worth" that ensues from such comparisons.[1] "An ethnic contrast that has produced" a great deal of conflict in Asia and Africa "is the juxtaposition of 'backward' and 'advanced' groups."[2] "Overall," "to be 'advanced' means to be interested in education and new opportunities, to be tied into the modern sector" of the economy ; "to be 'backward,'" on the other hand, "means to have inhibition on taking up new opportunities and to be somewhat apart from full participation in the modern sector."[3] Backwardness, argues Horowitz, subjects group members to a sense of powerlessness and insecurity,[4] which in turn generates "anxiety-laden perceptions of inter-group relations," and intense "pressures to end the state of backwardness."[5]

It is through an authoritative allocation of prestige, Horowitz continues, that the gap between "advanced" and "backward" is sought to be closed.[6] In post-colonial societies, furthermore, it is invariably the state which is required to make such authoritative allocations.[7] The most common ways for the state to close the prestige gap are to grant the language of the agitating group "exclusive official status,"[8] grant group members preferential treatment in the areas of education, employment or business, and most significantly, reserve jobs for them in the civil service. It follows from this that there is clearly a "middle class careerist component" to ethnic conflict, in so far as authoritative allocations of prestige secure a whole slate

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[1] Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2000),143.
[2] Ibid.,147.
[3] Ibid.,148.
[4] Ibid.,175-81.
[5] Ibid.,167.
[6] Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade : Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1963), 167, cited in Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 217.
[7] Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 217.
[8] Ibid., 219.

of new economic opportunities for the educated strata amongst "backward" groups.[9]
However,

> [t]hat educated elites make use of ethnic antipathy for their own economic purposes does not mean that ethnic conflict is fundamentally about jobs and perquisites. The elites could not use the antipathy for their own ends unless ethnic feelings were already strong.... The economic component to ethno-bureaucratic conflict is the tail and not the dog. The dog responds when the tail wags, because, apart from whatever crumbs may trickle down to a few relatives and retainers of civil servants, the composition of the civil service is an important indicator of who owns the country as well as of how groups are doing in the struggle for worth.... [Thus,] ethnic prestige can be derived [by the ethnic poor] from the success of wealthier or higher-status group members.[10]

It is, furthermore, not only from the economic success of ethnic elites, but also from their capture of political power, that the ethnic poor derive prestige. For power, for the ethnic poor, may not simply be "an instrument to secure other, tangible goods" ; it may, on the contrary, itself "*be* the benefit." Power, in other words, may be "sought purely for its value in confirming a claimed status," and in averting domination by ethnic "others," ie. for what it "reflects and prevents." This non-"processual" understanding of power (which sees it as an end, rather than a means), Horowitz further claims, remains key to explaining why "control of the state" remains such a central aim in ethnic conflict, with poorer ethnic actors being much less concerned about the tangible benefits accruing from such control.[11] This perception of power, together with the ethnic poor's capacity to derive prestige from the ascendancy of the ethnic upper class, also remains key to grasping how the symbolic needs of the ethnic poor are reconciled with the economic and political ambitions of ethnic elites in Horowitz's framework.[12] Thus, the concepts of "power as an end" and "derivative prestige" play a key role in Horowitz's attempt to provide a symbolic account of motivations driving the ethnic masses.

I now examine the assumptions on which Horowitz's argument rests. Horowitz states at the outset that his symbolic theory of motivations applies only to "unranked systems," in which ethnic groups relate to one another in a non-hierarchical manner,[13] with each group being internally differentiated by class.

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[9] Ibid., 224.
[10] Ibid., 225-26 (emphasis added).
[11] Ibid., 186-87.
[12] Ibid., 226.
[13] Ibid., 17.

"Ranked systems," in contrast, are characterized by hierarchical relations between ethnic groups, an absence of intra-group differentiation, and the consequent overlapping of ethnicity and class.[14] Horowitz argues that it is this coincidence between ethnicity and class that leads conflict in ranked systems to take on "a class coloration," which is not the case in unranked systems, where ethnic antagonisms supersede those oriented around class.[15]

Significantly, it is the absence of class differentiation *within* ethnic groups that serves as evidence of hierarchical relations *between* them in Horowitz's theory. Conversely, the presence of class differences within one ethnic group rules out the possibility of its being subordinated by another. For the "clearest indicator of subordination is the logical impossibility of an acknowledged upper class among the subordinate group," though "that is not to say that all members of a superordinate group are of upper-class standing." [16] This tying of intra-group economic stratification with the absence of inter-group relations of material dominance and subordination serves two purposes in Horowitz's framework : it rules out material issues as a factor driving inter-group conflict, and it secures the premises necessary for the operation of his symbolic theory. For the last can apply to the ethnic poor only when they have a coethnic elite from whose economic and political ascendancy they are able to derive prestige.

But Horowitz's argument lays itself open to two objections. First, the presence of an elite within an ethnic group does not suffice to indicate that its non-elite sections suffer no material exploitation at the hands of another group. For the material relations of domination and subordination that characterize relations between superordinate and subordinate groups in a ranked order may well persist for some time after a system has made the transition from ranked to unranked, ie. after elites have emerged amongst subordinate groups. In other words, the presence of an elite notwithstanding, the ethnic poor amongst subordinate groups may continue to be exploited by sections of superordinate groups, on account of their persisting economic dependence on the latter. And material issues are especially likely to drive

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[14] Ibid., 21-23.
[15] Ibid., 30-32.
[16] Ibid., 25.

ethnic mobilization when elites within the subordinate group constitute only a small minority, being vastly outnumbered by their poorer coethnics.

This is precisely the situation that prevails amongst SCs in Uttar Pradesh. While reservations granted to SCs in post-independence India have helped create a SC middle class over time, the vast majority of SCs still earn their living as labourers. Most of these labourers, furthermore, remain employed as farm hands on the fields of upper caste and OBC farmers, their landlessness exacerbating both their economic dependence on their employers, as well as their vulnerability to economic abuse. It should be mentioned here that Horowitz sees caste as constituting a ranked system, and as consequently falling outside the purview of his symbolic theory.[17] But the middle class that has developed amongst SCs over the last few decades has served to transform caste into an unranked order, and hence one to which both Horowitz's symbolic theory, and my critique of it, applies.

I now come to my second critique. This consists in the objection that in deriving symbolic motivations from the ethnic poor's support for parties that have secured material benefits only for ethnic elites, Horowitz overlooks the possibility of a gap between party performance and voter aspirations. Voters with material aspirations may, in other words, vote for parties that have fallen short of fulfilling those aspirations, and that have brought them symbolic benefits instead. They may do this for two reasons : (1) the limited options available in the electoral market, which make the given party the best choice, its shortcomings notwithstanding, in which case support cannot be seen as arising from any partisan commitment ; and (2) the belief that the party concerned remains committed to securing material benefits for the ethnic poor, and that it will honour this commitment in future, in which case the ethnic poor's support may be understood in partisan terms.

It is this second scenario that explains the Chamar poor's support for the BSP ; given the BSP's channelling of material benefits to the Chamar middle class, the Horowitzian framework would call for the interpretation of this support strictly in psychological terms. But in so doing, it would miss both the material aspirations of the Chamar poor, as well as the material expectations they nurture of future BSP governments.

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[17] Ibid., 53, n. 164.

I now turn to discuss a few other symbolic interpretations, as applied specifically to the Chamar poor's support for the BSP. These by and large follow the Horowitzian framework ; they see the BSP as having delivered largely symbolic benefits to Chamar labour, and this constituency's support as having arisen from a preoccupation with the BSP's capture of the state, as well as dignity gains derived from the election of elite coethnics nominated by the party. This dignity-driven understanding of low caste voting is articulated well by Myron Weiner, who argues that the reason why the political incorporation of lower castes within representative structures "has not resulted in the pursuit of broadly egalitarian public policies" in India, is because the goals pursued have been "less broad-based education or health," and "more respect, equality of treatment and symbolic gains." In other words, it is because the ethnic poor have divorced the pursuit of dignity from a material politics that "the presence of underprivileged castes in positions of power" has not facilitated policy action that could have brought material empowerment to those at the bottom of lower-caste groups.[18]

Zoya Hasan, writing about the BSP's politics specifically, continues in a similar vein :

The most remarkable characteristic of lower caste politics is the pursuit of power…[D]alit [ie. SC] leaders are preoccupied with the question of who governs and how the new political order should be established and maintained… [They] attach great importance to gaining government positions, and measure social and economic progress by their groups' share in public life : education, professions and public employment. Kanshi Ram, the pioneer of the movement to politically organize the bahujan samaj … puts the matter bluntly : "We have a one point programme – take power." The BSP's principal slogans underscore this thrust : *mat hamara raj tumhara, nahi chalega nahi chalega* [you will rule with our votes, this cannot go on, cannot go on] or *vote se lenge PM/CM, arakshan se SP/DM* [our votes will get us the posts of PM/CM, and reservations the posts of SP/DM].[19]

PM and CM here refer to the national and state-level executive offices of the Prime Minister and Chief Minister, whereas SP and DM refer to the posts of the

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[18] Myron Weiner, "The Struggle for Equality : Caste in Indian Politics," in Atul Kohli, ed., *The Success of India's Democracy* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2001), 193-225, cited in Atul Kohli, "Introduction," in ibid., 16.
[19] Zoya Hasan, "Representation and Redistribution : The New Lower Caste Politics in North India," in Francine R. Frankel et.al., eds., *Transforming India : Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 2000), 155 (translation mine).

Superintendent of Police, and the District Magistrate, who head the district-level police and administration respectively. Hasan thus draws attention to the value attached by lower castes to the penetration of the state and the bureaucracy ; her analysis, in this sense, closely resembles that of Horowitz. She also shares Horowitz's view that economic benefits matter much less to the ethnic poor than dignity gains, and that they remain prepared to support ethnic parties despite the latter's disproportionate channelling of material benefits to the ethnic upper class. This emerges clearly from the following passage :

[D]alits supported their "own" elites in the expectation that they would share the spoils of power and wealth once they obtained government positions. But the BSP has succeeded in retaining dalit support without always delivering material benefits … It could be argued that its success owed much to the radical emphasis placed by the party on contesting upper caste oppression. This aspect of its mobilization programme is critical because the party did not subscribe to any new economic programme or ideology and hardly ever proposed new policies. In these circumstances, the politics of symbolism and recognition has been given priority to encourage the growth of their own constituency. An enormous amount of its energy has been spent in the politicization of dalits through symbolic acts of dalit empowerment and resisting upper caste hegemony, rather than in securing material benefits. As one IAS [ie. Indian Administrative Service[20]] officer put it, "The dalit fight is not for economic emancipation, it is a battle for social recognition. If the dalit assertion was for economic rights then we would back the Communist parties. We are struggling for dignity and participation in government which gives us social status."[21]

Hasan's perspective is also echoed by Sudha Pai. Assessing the BSP's response to the issues facing SCs in Uttar Pradesh, Pai writes :

[T]he BSP's espousal of the issues of self-respect and dignity struck a sensitive chord among dalits who, unhappy with oppression and humiliation by upper castes, moved towards the party despite its lack of enunciation of a clear-cut economic agenda…. While in power the BSP spent considerable resources on programmes … aimed at providing self-respect and empowerment … which have emptied the coffers of the state without dealing with the longer-term disadvantages faced by particularly the poorer sections of dalits. Yet, the important political position gained by the BSP is seen from the fact that no government could be formed without its participation during the decade.[22]

Explaining the BSP's "failure to embrace an economic agenda," Pai continues :

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[20] The IAS is an elite administrative corps.
[21] Hasan, "Representation and Redistribution," 161-62.
[22] Sudha Pai, "Dalit Question and Political Response : Comparative Study of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 38, No. 11 (March 2004) : 1149.

An important reason [for this failure] is the view that the BSP leadership has of the problem of poverty and the means to overcome it. According to Kanshi Ram, poverty and deprivation among dalits is the result of social and political powerlessness rooted in the brahmanical [ie. caste] system and not an economic condition to be dealt with by economic policies.... [I]f political power was in the hands of the oppressed, they could demand better wages and working conditions and would no longer be badly treated on grounds of their low social status. Economic power according to him is based upon political power.[23]

Hasan and Pai thus follow Horowitz in deriving motivations straight from voting behaviour, rather than relying on direct engagement with voters. Hasan, furthermore, relies on interviews with SC government officers to assess the motivations driving the SC masses (see passage cited above), thereby substituting the voice of the ethnic poor with that of the ethnic middle class. Both scholars also draw to a good extent on media reports, and statements of BSP leaders, the latter derived from both journalistic and academic sources, to assess the BSP's agenda and performance. As I have argued in Chapter 1, this raises problems in that : (1) the media in Uttar Pradesh, while critiquing the BSP's lavish expenditure on symbolic politics, has rarely recognized or lauded its material efforts, on account of a pervasive upper caste bias ; and (2) the BSP leadership has always emphasized the party's symbolic efforts for two strategic reasons : (a) the difficulty the BSP has faced in delivering material benefits in its early phase, when its inability to form the government has denied it access to policy instruments and patronage resources[24] ; and (b) the severe resistance its material agenda has faced in the countryside in the latter phase, which has made material gains delivered by BSP governments both reversible and fragile.

I should reiterate that it is not my claim that the BSP has delivered any significant material empowerment to the Chamar poor. My argument instead is that the party has tried, sometimes against tremendous odds, to deliver such empowerment, and that the constituency concerned has noticed both the efforts it has made, and the resistance these efforts have encountered. Hasan and Pai, in other

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[23] Ibid., 1143.
[24] See Kanchan Chandra, "The Transformation of Ethnic Politics in India : The Decline of Congress and the Rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Hoshiarpur," *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 59, No. 1 (2000) : 38. Chandra argues that the BSP's use of the issue of humililation during its early phase of mobilization in the state of Punjab amounted to a "clever political strategy." For it would have been difficult for a new party to unseat the party of government by promising material benefits, given the advantage the latter would have enjoyed, when it came to the question of honouring such promises. The same argument applies to the early BSP in Uttar Pradesh.

words, are not wrong to perceive the BSP as having fallen short on the material front. But they are mistaken to conclude from this that Chamar labour's support for the party has had only a symbolic rationale. While their choice of sources has alerted these scholars to the BSP's material shortcomings, these same sources, together with their failure to engage with the poorer sections of the BSP's lower caste constituency, has led them to overlook the material aspirations this constituency has nurtured, and the dynamics that have caused them to trust the BSP to fulfil those aspirations in future. For a story of the Chamar poor's support is incomplete without a story of their trust. I discuss this trust-based voting in section 1.3.

1.2. "ELITE MANIPULATION" PERSPECTIVES CONSIDERED

Psychological theories see ethnic elites and ethnic masses as both deriving benefits from ethnic politics, these benefits albeit being of different sorts, ie. material and psychological, respectively. Elite manipulation theories, in contrast, see ethnic masses as gaining little from ethnic mobilization, and explain their participation in terms of an unthinking response to the self-interested manipulation of ethnic symbols by ethnic elites. The elite manipulation perspective is articulated well by Paul R. Brass, who argues that elite competition plays a key role in the transformation of "ethnic categories" into "ethnic communities," [25] defining the former as "group[s] of people dissimilar from other peoples in terms of objective cultural criteria ..." and the latter as "ethnic groups [that are not only] objectively distinct from their neighbors, [but also] subjectively self-conscious of their distinctness ..." [26] Brass sees the transition from "ethnic categories" to "ethnic communities" as precipitating the onset of ethnic mobilization, and posits that it is by increasing "the number of ...symbolic referents than an ethnic group or a people has in common with each other and that distinguishes them from other groups" [27] that group leaders succeed in bringing this transition about.

He goes on to argue that there are two "kinds of elite competition that precipitate ethnic self-consciousness," the first being "a struggle for control over

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[25] Paul R. Brass, "Ethnicity and Nationality Formation," *Ethnicity* Vol. 3 (1976) : 229-33.
[26] Ibid., 226.
[27] Ibid., 227.

local…regions …[in] early modernizing societies" and the second emerging "in both modernizing and post-industrial societies when new opportunities arise for educational, social, economic and political advancement." [28] The first category of competition takes the following three forms : (1) native landed aristocracy fights alien conquerors for control over land in newly conquered territory, which sees local landlords promote "an indigenous ethnic separatism" as a way of maintaining their dominance ; (2) native clerics fight alien conquerors when the latter try to impose their religion on an indigenous population, which threatens to deprive the clerics of their influence ; and (3) native clerics fight the native aristocracy, when the latter collaborates with an external power "to promote the alien culture, or withdraw support from the local culture in a way that threatens the authority of indigenous religious leaders." [29] The second category of competition, Brass posits, arises "between socially mobilized segments of different ethnic categories for jobs, particularly government jobs, and other opportunities made available during the process of modernization." [30] Brass sums up his argument for elite manipulation in the following way :

Ethnic conflict and competition affect only those groups that either contain threatened traditional elites or groups that benefit by modernization and industrialization sufficiently to produce an educated intelligentsia or an entrepreneurial class in a position to compete for prestige positions and economic advantages. It deserves stressing, however, that most members of such ethnic groups may remain for decades as a relatively unmobilized rural peasantry or occupying lower class positions in the cities and towns. *They are mobilized over time and manipulated by contending elite groups*, who determine their linguistic alternatives and the cultural forms that will be transmitted from one generation to another. [31]

Scholars of South Asian politics have frequently adopted elite manipulation frameworks to explain the politicization of ethnicity in the region. Brass himself points to the clever invocation of the *Sharia* (Muslim personal law) as a symbol of Islam by the *ulema* (Muslim clergy) in the subcontinent. He argues that the *ulema*'s successful coupling of the *Sharia* and Muslim identity has allowed them to ward off efforts by secular Muslim elites to reform Muslim personal law, which would have threatened the *ulema*'s own hold over the Muslim public, and that the *Sharia* has been

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[28] Ibid., 229.
[29] Ibid., 230.
[30] Ibid., 232.
[31] Ibid., 233 (emphasis added).

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a key symbol in the conflict between religious and secular Muslim elites, both in pre-1947 India, and in post-1947 India and Pakistan.[32] The point, in other words, is that the Muslim clergy has played a key role in socializing the Muslim masses to conceive of legal reform as un-Islamic, and has benefitted far more than ordinary Muslims from the ensuing radicalization.

Similarly, Stanley J. Tambiah explains ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka in terms of elite manipulation. The Sinhalese Buddhist revivalism of the 1880s, Tambiah argues, aimed at buttressing the power of the Buddhist clergy over the laity, which the intrusion of Christianity had threatened.[33] This movement was also "supported by and served the interests" of an emergent Sinhalese business class ; this was evident from the ire directed by Buddhist chauvinists against those who constituted competition for Sinhalese entrepreneurs, namely, "Tamil, Muslim, and Indian money-lenders, traders, and merchants," who were "branded as exploiters of the Sinhalese consumer public at large." The Buddhist revival, in other words, sought to mobilize the Sinhalese masses against those who threatened the interests of the Sinhalese elite, by invoking the so-called danger posed to Buddhism, and to the economic interests of ordinary Sinhalese, and by portraying these themes as being central to both elite, and movement, concerns.[34]

Brass's and Tambiah's arguments provide a good indication as to what sort of objections a trust-based account of Chamar voting might expect to encounter from the elite manipulation school. Trust, particularly when it leads voters to support parties on the basis of future expectations, rather than benefits delivered in the past, would appear like "emotion" or "unthinking belief" from the cynical perspective of elite manipulation theorists ; they would much more readily interpret the Chamar poor's willingness to vote for the BSP, despite being largely passed over in the distribution of material benefits, as the handiwork of manipulative Chamar elites, and party leaders. For both have much to gain from the continued support of Chamar labour - Chamar elites their economic and political ascendancy, and the BSP leadership its access to the state, and the opportunity to wield political power.

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[32] Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism : Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi : Sage, 1991), 97-98.
[33] Stanley J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1992), 6-7, and Chapter 2.
[34] Ibid., 6-8.

I posit, however, that trust is not an emotional or unthinking phenomenon, but rather a rational and cognitive one. This is so because it ensues upon an understanding of something, or someone, as trustworthy.[35] Once we see trust as arising from knowledge of certain kinds, we are better able to rescue our trust-centric account of Chamar voting from the domain of elite manipulation. In the following section, I argue for a cognitive understanding of trust, and show how trust, defined in cognitive terms, constitutes the basis of Chamar labour's support for the BSP.

1.3. AN ACCOUNT OF TRUST-BASED VOTING

A Cognitive Understanding of Trust

In conceiving of trust as cognition-laden and reason-bound, I draw on Russell Hardin's observation that trust follows from "assessments of the trustworthiness of the potentially trusted person." [36] It is because it misses this point, Hardin argues, that the recent literature on trust defines "our problem as a failure of trust, rather than of trustworthiness." As he puts it, "we do not simply want to increase trust per se, because we should not trust the untrustworthy." [37] Notions of risk, vulnerability and uncertainty remain intrinsic to any valid conception of trust [38] ; to cite Hardin once again, "[i]t is pointless to say you trust someone unless there is some risk of your suffering a loss if that someone does not fulfill your trust after you have acted on that trust to their initial benefit." [39] To argue that trust is rational, therefore, is to argue that trust involves an assumption on the part of the person trusting that the risk he or she has undertaken is likely to pay off. Trust is rational, in other words, because it proceeds on the basis of at least some minimal degree of confidence that the person trusted is trustworthy.

It needs to be noted here that the ground for trusting might, in some cases, be an emotional one ; the person trusting might, for instance, love the person he or

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[35] Russell Hardin, *Trust* (Cambridge, UK : Polity Press, 2006), 17.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 1.
[38] For the argument that vulnerability and uncertainty are core elements in trust relations, see Carol A. Heimer, "Solving the Problems of Trust," in Karen S. Cook, ed., *Trust in Society* (New York : Russell Sage Foundation, 2001), 40-88.
[39] Hardin, *Trust*, 28.

she trusts, with the trust arising on the basis of that love. To admit this, however, is not to admit that trust itself is an emotion, but only to recognize that "emotion may influence the formation of …[the cognitive] mental state of trust." [40] Trust is cognitive because it depends on the truster's having "relevant knowledge" about the trustee – knowledge about, amongst other things, the latter's "moral commitments …psychological or character disposition," [41] and so on. While any emotion harboured by the truster towards the trustee may inform the formation of such knowledge, this emotion is not synonymous with the state of trust that knowledge engenders. Though helping shape trust, emotion is not, in other words, coterminous with trust.

Bases of Trust

The question now arises as to what generates perceptions of trustworthiness, since it is on the basis of these that we hold trust to emerge. The literature on trust, by and large, provides four answers to this question.

The first emphasizes knowledge that we have about the agent to be trusted (about his or her past actions, character traits, psychological make-up and so on), knowledge that arises on the basis of our personal, face-to-face interaction and experience. James S. Coleman describes such "personalized" trust as "a bet on the future" that we place with respect to information that we have at present.[42]

The three other factors do not involve any reliance on personal experience for the assessment of risk ; these constitute what we may call "depersonalized" bases of trust. [43] The first of these factors are networks. Elinor Ostrom and T.K.Ahn, describing how networks encourage people to keep trust, write that :

[r]epititive interaction among individuals –a sign of a robust network and an important form of social capital – provides incentives to individuals to build a reputation of being

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[40] Mabel Berezin, "Emotions and the Economy," in Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg, eds., *The Handbook of Economic Sociology* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2005), 111.
[41] Hardin, *Trust*, 17.
[42] James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA : Belknap Press, 1990), Chapter 5.
[43] I borrow this term from Marilynn B. Brewer. See Brewer, "Ethnocentrism and Its Role in Interpersonal Trust," in Marilynn B. Brewer and Barry E. Collins, eds., *Scientific Enquiry in the Social Sciences* (San Francisco : Jossey-Bass, 1981), 345-59. While Brewer refers to trust based on ascriptive characteristics as "depersonalized" trust, I see networks and institutions as also constituting bases of such trust.

trustworthy. Even very selfish individuals may not betray the trustor under those circumstances. In fact, precisely because he is selfish and he wishes to obtain gains from future transactions with the trustor, a selfish individual embedded in assured repetitive interactions will be more likely to reciprocate trust. [44]

It is, however, not only in their dealings with agents they are likely to interact with in future, that individuals embedded in networks are likely to keep trust. For network theory predicts trustworthy behaviour in course of one-time interactions as well. As Ostrom and Ahn argue, even when "the transaction between A and B is not of a repetitive nature," the fact that they are embedded in a dense horizontal network capable of "efficiently transmitting information across...network members," means that "there are other agents C and D who obtain information about the transaction and condition their future transactions with A on whether A behaves trustworthily in his transaction with B. Then again, A has an incentive not to betray B, not because of the prospects for future gain from transactions with B, but in expectation of those from C and D."

It is this same logic that persuades used-car dealers to keep trust with their consumers. "Used-car dealers increasingly rely on Internet auctions to sell their stock. Since most consumers buy cars only infrequently, the transaction is most likely of a one-shot nature. The managers of the Internet auction sites typically provide potential consumers with the information about the dealers' past transactions. They actively solicit comments from the past consumers on the dealers' trustworthiness and post them on the auction sites so that potential buyers can see how the dealer has behaved in the past." [45]

Institutions comprise the second basis of depersonalized trust. The mechanisms whereby institutions create "incentives for the parties of transactions to behave trustworthily" differ slightly from those of networks, in that networks regulate behaviour through informal norms alone, whereby institutions do so both through informal norms and explicit rules. As Ostrom and Ahn point out, "[w]hen...formal [rules] ... exist that specify punishments to be imposed on those who do not keep contracts, they affect a trustor's assessment of the trustee's future behavior" in a way that encourages rather than discourages trust. For though "the

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[44] Elinor Ostrom and T.K. Ahn, "Introduction," in Ostrom and Ahn, eds., *Foundations of Social Capital* (Cheltenham, UK : Edward Elgar Publishing, 2003), xvii.
[45] Ibid., xviii.

existence of laws that punish fraud may not completely eliminate the possibility of fraud, it does increase the trustor's assessment that the trustee will abide by the terms of the transaction." It needs to be kept in mind, though, that the effectiveness of a law or a statute "as a form of social capital, depends not only on content but more critically on how they are actually implemented." [46] Enforcement, in other words, is crucial to the inducement of trustworthy behaviour, and to the generation of perceptions of trustworthiness.

We now consider identity, the third and last basis of depersonalized trust. Jean Esminger provides an incisive sociological analysis of identity as a factor nurturing perceptions of trustworthiness.[47] Drawing on her study of the Orma in Northeastern Kenya, Ensminger shows how certain cultures use "pseudo-kin relations" to solve the problem of trust,[48] in circumstances where solving this problem is crucial to the performance of significant economic functions. Ensminger argues that cattle constitute "one of the most significant family resources" in the Orma economy, which together with the fact that they have to be "herded on remote camps," makes it important that herd-owners are able to trust their herders. Earlier, when herders were the sons of herd-owners themselves, the problem of trust did not arise in a significant way. But in recent years, with their sons "being educated, and less available for labor," Orma herd-owners have had to employ non-kin herders to undertake the task of herding. It is in response to the risk that this entails, Ensminger argues, that herd-owners have developed a "fictive kin" system that treats "hired herders as if they were sons." In other words, the development of "close personal ties," that transform herders into "'adopted' sons," is one of the primary mechanisms employed by herd-owners to encourage herders to be trustworthy.[49] Needless to say, the herd-owners' understanding that the treatment of non-kin as kin will encourage the keeping of trust, arises from their conception of kin as being, ipso facto, trustworthy.

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Jean Esminger, "Reputations, Trust and the Principal Agent Problem," in *Trust in Society*, 185-201.

[48] Karen S. Cook, "Trust in Society," in *Trust in Society*, xiii. Cook summarizes Esminger's argument here.

[49] Ibid., xix.

While Ensminger focuses on kinship specifically, other scholars see all ascriptive identities (clan, tribe, race, caste and gender) as constituting bases of trust. Thus Michael Bacharach and Diego Gambetta emphasize the role played by "identity signalling" in helping solve the "'primary problem of trust,'" which is "deciding when and whom to trust about what." [50] They argue that the answer to the question whether or not someone is trustworthy often hinges on an "assessment of the trustee's trustworthiness based on the truster's own belief, derived from experience, that the trustee's qualities make him or her a good bet." "Identity," they continue, "often 'signals' trustworthiness since it is a sign of a more mundane quality that is known to be correlated with trustworthiness," namely, membership of the clan, hometown, gender or ethnicity, that the truster himself or herself belongs to.[51] This suggests that trust evoked by identity signalling rests, at a deeper level, on knowledge arising from the truster's personal interaction with at least some carriers of the relevant identity, with this personal interaction establishing, for the truster, the correlation between the relevant identity and the quality of trustworthiness. Once the correlation is established, however, it serves to evoke trust whenever the truster encounters bearers of the identity in question, without any further personal interaction and empirical corroboration being necessary. It is thus that identity ends up generating trust on a depersonalized and a priori basis, despite the role initially played by personal experience in forging the correlation between a specific identity category and the attribute of trustworthiness.

An Account of Trust-Based Voting

Of the four bases of trust discussed above, it is the first, ie. personal and first-hand knowledge of the agent to be trusted, that explains Chamar labour's support for the BSP. This support has arisen on the basis of the conviction that the BSP remains committed to securing material empowerment for the Chamar poor, and that it is the difficult circumstances it has encountered that have prevented the party from honouring this commitment so far. Thus, the Chamar poor have perceived the BSP as having fallen short on the material front, but not on account of

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[50] See Michael Bacharach and Diego Gambetta, "Trust in Signs," in *Trust in Society*, 148-84.
[51] Cook, "Trust in Society," xvii-xviii.

a lack of effort. They have, rather, seen the party as having been constrained, by the limits imposed by its coalition partner, the BJP, and the stiff opposition its material agenda has faced, from the upper caste bureaucracy, and landed castes in the countryside. They have also expected that the party would be in a better position to deliver the goods, once it captured a majority ; a majority, the reasoning went, would set the party free of the compulsions of coalition politics, and allow it to pursue its agenda relatively unhindered.

There are two sides to the story of how the BSP has come to be perceived as trustworthy by Chamar labour. The first pertains to their witnessing first-hand what the party has been up against, namely, the resistance that its material (especially land-related) efforts have evoked, and the brutal treatment that dominant castes have meted out to party cadres. The resistance has taken two main forms : (1) collusion between landed castes and sections of the lower bureaucracy, undertaken with a view to subvert the party agenda at the grassroots, at a time when the party has been in power ; and (2) reversal of gains made by lower castes while the BSP has been in office, achieved through the rulings of non-BSP governments, and the latitude granted to upper castes by the lower administration, who have looked the other way as the former have restored the status quo disturbed by BSP governments, immediately following the cessation of BSP rule. The repression of BSP cadres, on the other hand, have not stopped at physical intimidation and beatings ; party workers have been killed on a routine basis, especially before elections, when anxieties relating to the BSP's agenda, should it come to power, have been high.

The second part of the story pertains to the Chamar poor's witnessing the BSP's determination in the face of these odds. The BSP has often anticipated the resistance to its programmes, and it is with an eye to managing this resistance that Mayawati has routinely transferred SC bureaucrats to strategic posts upon assuming power. The BSP's response has also consisted, in large part, in stepping up pressure on upper caste sections of the higher and middle level bureaucracy, who have toed the line, being much more likely to be held accountable for lapses than their subordinates, placed at lower rungs of the state. And though a good deal of subversion has occurred at the grassroots, on account of the thicker relationships between state agents and societal actors here, the BSP's strict supervision of the

higher administration has meant that the extent of subversion has been lower than would have otherwise been the case. But the most heroic part of the party's response has consisted in the reaction that repression has evoked amongst party cadres. They have not been cowed by the intimidation and the murders, but have carried on with the task of helping the government implement its agenda, no matter what the costs.

Chamar labour has thus borne testimony to both the resistance and the response, as these have manifested themselves at the grassroots. And it is for this reason that they have trusted the party, and its commitment to a material agenda, and have expected the BSP to deliver on this commitment more fully when it formed a government all on its own. Their future-oriented voting, in other words, has arisen from their perception of the BSP as trustworthy ; it is this understanding, grounded in their first-hand experience of BSP rule, that has persuaded them to support the party, the shortcomings of past BSP governments notwithstanding, and to reserve judgement for a time when the party commanded a majority in the state.

While it is personalized trust, arising from their first-hand experience of BSP rule, that has led the Chamar poor to support the party, it is depersonalized trust, grounded in ascriptive identity, that has led non-Chamar *bahujans* and non-*bahujans* to vote for coethnics nominated by the BSP.

Some scholars of ethnic politics have drawn on identity signalling theory to argue that the identities, or "ethnic marks," of electoral candidates, often convey information that prove crucial to the determination of electoral choice. Thus, Daniel N. Posner, writing about electoral politics in post-independence Zambia, argues that "ethnic group memberships underlie people's perceptions of how patronage resources are distributed by those who enjoy access to them," and that "in a context where all politicians promise to distribute jobs and development resources to the people whose votes they are seeking, voters use ethnicity as a cue to help them distinguish promises that are credible from promises that are not." [52] And Kanchan Chandra makes the same point with regard to India, writing that "a benefit-seeking

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[52] Daniel N. Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2005), 91.

voter expects to obtain the greatest material and psychic satisfaction from individual elites from her 'own' ethnic group who occupy elected office." [53]

It is especially in a context of patronage politics that voters allow the ethnic identities of candidates to determine their voting behaviour. Chandra establishes the relationship between patronage politics and identity-based voting in the following way. She labels as "patronage-democracies" all those democracies "in which the state monopolizes access to jobs and services," and in which elected officials have the power "to distribute the vast resources controlled by the state to voters on an *individualized* basis, by exercising their discretion in the implementation of state policy." [54] She argues that where discretionary power to implement policy "lies in the hands of elected officials, promises to enact policy legislation favourable to an individual or group are worthless unless accompanied by a verified record of implementation in favour of that individual or group." This, Chandra posits, makes it important for voters to look at "pattern[s] of past patronage transactions" before deciding whom to support. However, since "[p]atronage transactions cannot be conducted openly in modern democracies," voters typically do not have access to the information that they need.[55] It is on account of this information deficit, and because data pertaining to ethnic identities is acquired at much less cost than data pertaining to nonethnic identities,[56] that "voters ...code beneficiaries on the basis of one of their many ethnic identities, whether or not these identities were actually relevant in securing benefits." [57] This in turn creates pressure on politicians to distribute benefits on the basis of ethnic, rather than non-ethnic criteria, with the added proviso that the employment of non-ethnic criteria remains unverifiable in any case.[58] It is in this way, Chandra argues, that we see a "self-enforcing and self-reinforcing equilibrium of ethnic favouritism" set in motion in "patronage-democracies." [59]

But the trust evoked by ethnic identities, that leads voters to expect patronage benefits from coethnic candidates, and vote for them, is different from the

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[53] Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed : Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2004), 12.
[54] Ibid., 6.
[55] Ibid., 57.
[56] Ibid., 37.
[57] Ibid., 58.
[58] Ibid., 60-61.
[59] Ibid., 64.

trust evoked by direct experience of party rule, that leads constituents to vote on a partisan basis, the identities of candidates notwithstanding. The trust evoked in the first case is shallow, for legislators voted into power by coethnic constituents are required to deliver patronage immediately, during their very first term in office. While it is true that, given the individualized or "retail" nature of patronage transactions,[60] "all group members do not receive benefits simultaneously," it is important for the legislator to secure patronage for some coethnic constituents at the least, failing which he "can be punished by the defection of the group as a whole," the next time he contests elections.[61] An incumbent dealing in patronage, therefore, has only a short period, namely, the interval between two elections, within which to prove himself to his constituency. Patronage-based voting, thus, turns around expectations that voter demands will be satisfied in the short term. The trust underlying such voting is, moreover, shallow, since it is revoked following the failure of this instant satisfaction to materialize.

The support provided to the BSP by non-Chamar *bahujan* and non-*bahujan* voters is driven by this shallow trust. These constituencies, seeking patronage from the party, vote for BSP candidates only when they are coethnics ; they do not, furthermore, vote for a coethnic legislator a second time, if his first term fails to bring them the requisite benefits.

The contrast with the voting patterns of the Chamar poor could hardly be more striking. This constituency has given up both the dignity gains flowing from coethnic representation, and the material patronage secured by legislators for coethnics, when they have voted for the non-Chamar candidates nominated by the BSP in increasingly larger numbers in 1996 and after. (In contrast, the BSP's non-Chamar constituencies have received dignity gains following the election of coethnic candidates, even when coethnic legislators have fallen short of delivering them material patronage.) The Chamar poor have, again, received only a small share of the material policy benefits that BSP rule has brought to the Chamar middle class. Their support has rather hinged on expectations that the party would deliver them such benefits in future, these expectations arising from the belief that the BSP remains

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[60] Ibid., 50.
[61] Ibid., 55.

committed to their material empowerment in the long term. This belief, significantly, has led this constituency to support the party over a period of 11 years (1996-2007),[62] spanning multiple elections, and to postpone judging its material performance till the time it succeeded in capturing a majority, and forming a government of its own.

Chamar labour's readiness to give the BSP a chance to prove itself over the long term signals the deep trust this constituency has reposed in the party. Of the four bases of trust, it is direct and first-hand experience, in this instance, of party commitment, gauged in terms of both efforts and sacrifices made by party actors, that has led voters to look beyond tangible benefits delivered in the past, while determining electoral choice.

Before concluding, I briefly discuss the Chamar identity of the BSP's top leadership (both Kanshi Ram, the BSP's founder, and his successor, Mayawati, have been Chamars), and the role this has played in sustaining the support of the Chamar poor. There is little doubt that Chamars have drawn a good deal of pride from Kanshi Ram's, and later, Mayawati's, leadership of the party, and Mayawati's repeated accession to the post of Chief Minister when the BSP has been in government. Mayawati's position as party chief has assumed special significance during the BSP's multiethnic phase (1996 and after), when the party's large scale nomination of non-Chamar candidates has left Chamars bereft of coethnic representation, and the ensuing dignity, and patronage, gains. In this phase, Mayawati's presence at the helm has not only compensated Chamars for the loss of coethnic nominations ; it has also reassured the Chamar poor, specifically, that the party retains a long term commitment to their material empowerment, and that the sacrifices they have borne in the interim have not been in vain.

This raises a problem for my position that it is their first-hand experience of BSP rule, rather than the identity of party representatives, that explains the long term trust reposed by the Chamar poor in the BSP. This position is, however, defendable,

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[62] While the BSP failed to deliver material policy benefits to Chamar labour in the pre-1996 period as well, this constituency did, on the other hand, receive more coethnic representation and material patronage during this phase, compared to 1996 and after. It is because Chamar labour gave up these two categories of benefits in the BSP's multiethnic phase (1996 and after), that the argument for a trust-based, future-oriented vote, holds up better during this phase, compared to the earlier period.

in that it is less Mayawati's Chamar identity, than her being a Chamar leader who has proved her commitment to their cause, that has led Chamar labour to perceive her as trustworthy. This emerges clearly from my interviews with Chamar respondents, and particularly, Chamar women, in the field. The narrative surrounding Mayawati is one of sacrifice, determination and courage in the face of odds ; while her identity as a Chamar, and as a woman, are important facets of this narrative, these identities, in and of themselves, are less crucial than the difficulties they are understood to have posed, from where the story turns to emphasize the grit with which she has tackled, and overcome, these difficulties.

Where her Chamar identity has been evoked, respondents have emphasized the hurdles she has faced as a low caste politician, battling it out in an upper caste- and OBC- dominated arena. Female respondents, likewise, have drawn attention to the tough battles she has waged as a single woman, with the vulnerabilities that status brings with it in a traditional society. But it is her overcoming of these obstacles that has constituted the kernel of the narrative ; it is this triumph, together with the sacrifice she has made in choosing to remain single, that has attested to her commitment to the cause of the *bahujan* poor.[63]

Mayawati's credibility has been further boosted by her record while in power. So far as the Chamar poor are concerned, this record has consisted not so much in her securing material gains, than in her attempting to do so, the odds notwithstanding. Respondents have recalled her stubborn refusal to give in to the BJP's tactics of intimidation, her forceful response to upper caste opposition to her material agenda, undertaken through the disciplining of the bureaucracy, and her rallying of BSP cadres, and her exhorting them not to give up on the struggle. In other words, it is not Mayawati's Chamar identity that has mattered as much as the kind of Chamar leader she has proved to be. Her being a Chamar has, no doubt, brought dignity gains to the Chamar poor, especially in 1996 and after, but it is her

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[63] Personal sacrifice on the part of leaders is rated very highly in the BSP subculture, there being a tacit understanding that the responsibilities of leading the movement are too great to be borne by those weighed down with familial duties and attachments. It is hardly a coincidence, therefore, that both Kanshi Ram and Mayawati took a decision to remain single ; this signalled their willingness to make the sacrifices that the struggle for *bahujan* empowerment demanded.

courageous leadership, and demonstrated commitment, rather than her caste per se, that has led them to trust the party under her stewardship.

That Mayawati herself understands this is clear from the care she has taken to groom her successor (also a Chamar, and a single man) for the tasks he will take on, following her demise ; this continues the tradition whereby Kanshi Ram meticulously groomed Mayawati herself for her present responsibilities. To conclude, while having a Chamar leader helps the Chamar poor feel a symbolic identification with the party, this does not, by itself, suffice to earn their long term trust. This last requires the leader to demonstrate his or her dedication to the struggle for their empowerment, and the capacity to make the sacrifices that struggle calls for.

2. The Dynamics of Multiethnic Transformations
2.1. ASYMMETRIC REPRESENTATION AND THE BSP

Programmatic Politics and the BSP

The Chamar constituency's willingness to support both non-Chamar *bahujan* and non-*bahujan* candidates has proved crucial to the success of the BSP's multiethnic transformation. Non-Chamar constituencies have supported the BSP only when it has nominated coethnics ; even these occasions, furthermore, have seen their support split between the BSP and other parties. As such, Chamar support has played a crucial role in the election of non-Chamar legislators, with upper caste ticket-seekers, in particular, being attracted to the BSP precisely on account of its unwavering command over the Chamar vote.

As stated earlier, Chamars, in supporting non-Chamar candidates, have sacrificed coethnic representation, and with that, the dignity gains and material patronage secured by legislators for coethnic constituents. Chamar labour, in addition, have borne the burdens associated with having landed castes as representatives. For legislators from landed communities have often protected coethnics guilty of exploiting Chamar farm hands, and molesting Chamar women, working on their fields. But the BSP has compensated Chamars for this loss, by delivering them a range of programmatic benefits. The most important of these benefits has been reservations ; the BSP's strict implementation of SC quotas has

opened up more reserved jobs than had been available to SCs under any other government. The benefits from quotas, however, have gone mostly to the Chamar middle class ; the failure of Chamar labour to educate themselves, particularly in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, has placed them at a distinct disadvantage in the competition. But in the West, Chamar labour's transition to the industrial sector has made schooling relatively affordable ; a small section of this constituency has thus succeeded in capturing quotas here, which has nurtured expectations that the BSP would bring more government jobs their way in the future, provided they retained the focus on education.

Unlike its enforcement of a perfect quota regime, which has largely benefitted middle class Chamars, the BSP's efforts to distribute land to agricultural labour, have targeted the Chamar poor. While these efforts have met with stiff resistance from both landed castes and the lower bureaucracy, with some of the gains being reversed upon the fall of BSP governments, these efforts have sufficed to convince this constituency that the party remains committed to their material empowerment. It is, indeed, this conviction, and the belief that the BSP would be able to deliver on this commitment once it commanded a government of its own, that has led Chamar labour to discount the party's performance, and deliver it a future-oriented vote.

We now come to the last category of policy gains, namely, those secured through the AVP, which has sought to provide infrastructure and amenities to SC-majority villages in the state. The impact of the AVP, which has targeted SCs living below the poverty line, has been limited for two reasons : (1) while improving living conditions in SC quarters, the AVP has not done much to stimulate economic mobility, or a rise in incomes, or even provide employment on a sustained basis ; and (2) AVP benefits have seen siphoned away by upper castes and OBCs in villages where SCs continue to remain dependent on these communities for a living. The AVP, as such, has not figured to the same extent as the BSP's efforts vis-a-vis quotas, and land, as a factor driving the Chamar vote.

But policy, or programmatic, benefits have, on the whole, played a key role in sustaining Chamar support during the BSP's multiethnic phase. At a time when Chamars have been deprived of dignity gains and material patronage, the BSP has

turned to programmatic politics to give middle class Chamars a reason to continue supporting the party. The party has been less successful in delivering the goods to the Chamar poor ; however, in so far as the BSP's efforts have signalled the party's programmatic intent to this constituency, it has supported the party in the expectation that this intent would be realized in the future.

Over and above Chamars, the BSP has also attempted to secure programmatic benefits for non-Chamar *bahujans*, who have benefitted from the party's land- and quota-related efforts, the BSP's efficient administration of reservations having extended no less to OBC quotas than to those for SCs. Non-Chamar *bahujans* have thus been a privileged constituency ; they have received the programmatic benefits denied to non-*bahujans,* while at the same time benefitting from the coethnic representation, and ensuing dignity and patronage gains, denied to Chamars. For the BSP has continued to nominate candidates from these communities in its multiethnic phase, cutting back on Chamar nominations alone to accommodate upper castes.

The BSP and the Asymmetric
Representation of Constituencies

The above account suggests that the BSP has treated its three caste constituencies differently, offering each (Chamar, non-Chamar *bahujan*, and non-*bahujan*) a separate mix of benefits. I refer to this situation as "asymmetric representation," where representation refers to the character of party-constituency ties. But the representation offered by the BSP has been asymmetric, not only in the sense that the party has treated its constituencies disparately, but also in that it has privileged some constituencies over others.

As stated above, non-Chamar *bahujans* have been the BSP's most pampered constituency ; they have received the patronage and coethnic representation denied to Chamars, as well as the programmatic benefits denied to upper castes. The rationale underlying this privileged treatment has been simple, namely, the BSP's founding mission of forging a plebeian political coalition, or *bahujan samaj.* The BSP has nominated non-*bahujans* precisely because *bahujan* communities, with the exception of Chamars, have denied it committed support, voting for the party only

when it has nominated coethnics, but not otherwise. The understanding here has been that the BSP would have to deliver programmatic benefits to non-Chamar *bahujans* before it can win them over and forge a *bahujan* alliance, but to do this, the party would first have to form the government, and do whatever it takes to capture power, ie. nominate non-*bahujans*, and ally with upper caste parties. It also attests to the BSP's eagerness to please the non-Chamar *bahujan* constituency, that it has continued granting tickets to these castes, even as it has increased non-*bahujan* nominations.

The whole point of multiethnic transformation, in other words, has been to build the *bahujan samaj*. The BSP has thus used one constituency, ie. non-*bahujans*, to unite the others, and to forge a political coalition in which that first non-subaltern constituency might arguably, in the long term, have no place. It is in this sense that the BSP has discriminated between its constituencies, and treated them unequally.

The question will arise as to why non-*bahujans* and Chamars have found it worth their while to bear the burdens that asymmetric representation has involved. For the programmatic benefits delivered to Chamars have come at a cost to non-*bahujan* castes ; the BSP's efforts to distribute land to agricultural labour, for instance, have followed on the heels of a crackdown on illegal occupation by upper castes of subaltern plots. The BSP's strict implementation of the SC/ST Act, again, has made it difficult for upper caste farmers to exploit SC agricultural labour, with the immunity from harassment afforded by the Act further encouraging strike action over agricultural wages. Chamars, too, have given up coethnic representation and patronage ; Chamar labour, additionally, have seen employers guilty of intimidating SCs being protected by BSP legislators from similar caste backgrounds.

The decision on the part of upper castes to bear the burdens owes largely to the crisis of coethnic representation they have faced in Uttar Pradesh since the mid-1990s, following the demise first, of the Congress, and then, of the BJP, the two parties that have traditionally accommodated this constituency within their ranks. Given the vacuum that has arisen following this event, it is understandable that upper castes have grasped the platform made available by the BSP, and not complained about the price.

The willingness of Chamars to put up with costs is explained somewhat differently. So far as the Chamar middle class is concerned, the explanation is quite straightforward ; the BSP has continued to deliver material policy benefits to this constituency in its multiethnic phase. Chamar labour, on the other hand, have received few such benefits. They have, however, borne the burdens in the understanding that these would pay off, in other words, that the sacrifices were necessary for the BSP to be able to form the government, and that every stint in government helped the BSP inch closer to that aim of capturing a majority, which would set the party free to implement its material agenda for the subaltern poor.

The Chamar poor in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, specifically, have had a still different reason for putting up with the price. My interviews with Chamar respondents in the East suggested an ideological investment in the *bahujan* movement, and an identification with the goal of *bahujan* unification. As such, they complained about costs a great deal less than Chamar labour in the West, and bore their sacrifices much more cheerfully. To that extent, their understanding of the purpose of multiethnic transformation was less instrumental, and more value-laden ; this understanding also closely approximated that of the BSP leadership itself.

2.2. ETHNIC PARTIES AND PROGRAMMATIC POLITICS

We have discussed Kanchan Chandra's argument that patronage-democracies encourage voting based on ethnic identities (see section 1.3.). Here, we examine another premise commonly accepted in the literature, namely, that ethnic parties engage only in patronage, and not in programmatic, politics. We do so because my study of the BSP indicates otherwise ; the BSP, in its multiethnic phase, has delivered programmatic benefits to some constituencies, patronage benefits to others, and a mix of both to yet a third category of constituents.

The relationship between ethnic parties and patronage, or clientelist, politics, is enunciated clearly by Herbert Kitschelt. Kitschelt posits that "an emphasis on ascriptive group membership favors [clientelist] practices [not only] for reasons of doctrine but also for organizational expediency." He elaborates :

First, patterns of ethnocultural social separation in terms of area of residence, physical appearance, social networks, or labor market segmentation facilitate the contracting, monitoring, and enforcing of direct clientelist exchange relations between politicians and citizens.... Second, clientelist exchange relations help ethnopolitical entrepreneurs to preempt cross-cutting cleavages in their ethnic constituency, whether they are class related or of some other kind. These mechanisms may explain Horowitz's ... generalization that, as a rule, ethnic parties drive out nonethnic parties unless nonethnic cleavages historically antedate the appearance of ethnocultural divides (e.g. Belgium).[64]

Kitschelt further claims that ethnic parties find clientelist and programmatic linkages difficult to combine. He argues that :

once politicians have secured their political office through clientelist exchanges, they may have ... lost their incentives to address the challenge of the collective choice problem [necessary for the pursuit of programmatic politics]. In clientelist parties, [moreover], an unambiguous, united programmatic voice... may even positively disorganize the party machine. The various rent-seeking support groups of a party may harbour such disparate programmatic preferences that the costs of programmatic unification are simply too high for the party. Giving salience to programmatic principles would obliterate the electoral coalition configured around a party's disbursement of selective incentives.[65]

I do not take issue with Kitschelt's first claim that ethnic parties are pre-disposed towards clientelist strategies of mobilization. But the case of the BSP clearly contravenes his second proposition, which posits that such parties cannot combine clientelist linkages with programmatic ones. Kitschelt fails to account for the BSP's combining of clientelist and programmatic linkages for two reasons.

The first relates to his argument that parties have little incentive to deliver programmatic benefits to their constituencies, once they have delivered them clientelist ones. This fails to take into account the possibility that parties may deliver programmatic benefits to some constituencies, and clientelist benefits to others. It is because the BSP delivers clientelist benefits predominantly to its non-Chamar constituencies that it retains the incentive to deliver programmatic benefits to its Chamar voters.

Second, Kitschelt argues that the adoption of programmatic politics would benefit some constituencies while hurting others, and by alienating the latter, would disrupt the electoral coalition constructed on a clientelist basis. But Kitschelt overlooks the possibility that the constituencies burdened by party programmes

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[64] Herbert Kitschelt, "Linkages between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Polities," *Comparative Political Studies* Vol. 33, No. 67 (2000) : 865-66.
[65] Ibid., 854.

might regard the clientelist (and other) benefits coming to them as adequate compensation for the costs. As discussed earlier, the BSP's policies have indeed hurt its upper caste voters. But the representation, and ensuing dignity gains and material patronage, secured by the party's upper caste legislators for coethnic constituents have led these constituents to overlook the costs of those policies.

There is one further point that Kitschelt makes, that has a bearing on the BSP. Objecting to the tendency amongst scholars to associate party discipline with programmatic cohesion, he argues that party discipline may be a matter of organizational coercion, no less than that of programmatic unity. He points out that discipline is frequently a feature of clientelist parties, for it is on account of this discipline that "legislators are indifferent to policy programs and do as they are told by the party leadership as long as the resources needed to feed their clientelist networks keep flowing." [66] But if party discipline is a feature of clientelist parties, then it is even more so a feature of parties that combine clientelist and programmatic linkages. For such parties require legislators elected on the strength of clientelist ties to refrain from objecting to policies that not only cater to constituencies other than their own, but also affect their own constituencies in an adverse way. The BSP is a highly disciplined and hierarchical party, that allows its upper caste legislators very little say in the making of policy decisions. BSP policies, whose positive impact is felt by *bahujans* alone, and which hurt the party's upper caste constituencies, are forged exclusively by Chamar leaders occupying top rungs of the party organization.

2.3. MULTIETHNIC TRANSFORMATIONS : DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESS

The failure/success of multiethnic transformations has been explained in different ways. Sociological explanations posit that when ethnic groups are in conflict in society, it may be difficult to accommodate those groups within the same ethnic party. Thus, Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth A. Shepsle see multiethnic parties as being "inherently unstable" ; conversely, Rabushka and Shepsle, as well as Donald L. Horowitz, see "ethnic parties, which bring together elites from a single ethnic category, or from socially harmonious ethnic categories" as likely "to enjoy a more

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[66] Ibid., 870.

stable existence." [67]

A second category of explanation invokes the internal organizational structure of ethnic parties as the determining variable. Thus, Kanchan Chandra argues that parties with centralized rules of intraparty advancement find it difficult to accommodate new ethnic groups, whereas parties with competitive rules are better able to do so. The assumption here is that the "success of political parties in attracting the support of voters from any [newly modernizing] ethnic category…depends directly upon their ability to incorporate office-seeking elites" from that category. However, "the incorporation of new elites usually means the displacement of those who already hold positions of power within the party organization," which means that such incorporation is likely to be resisted by the latter. Competitive rules of intraparty advancement provide a way out of this dilemma, in that they force "elites already entrenched in the party apparatus to recruit new elites if they are to safeguard their own positions. At the same time, they prevent the displacement of old elites by creating a system of alteration, so that those displaced have a stable expectation of returning…. A centralized internal structure, on the other hand, prevents elite incorporation by divorcing the incentives for those elites already entrenched within the party organization from the recruitment of new ones." [68]

The sociological explanation fails to account for the BSP's simultaneous accommodation of SCs and upper castes, at a time when these constituencies continued to be locked in relations of material antagonism, particularly in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. As for the explanation emphasizing party organization, the BSP's centralized structure has not prevented it from attracting new ethnic constituencies, and transforming itself into a multiethnic party. Chandra argues that its electoral success has helped the BSP overcome the constraints imposed by its centralized rules ; this electoral success, and the party's accession to power, has allowed it to absorb new elites through the horizontal expansion of posts, which has compensated for the limited opportunities for vertical mobility arising from the absence of

[67] Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Politics in Plural Societies : A Theory of Democratic Instability* (Columbus, OH : Charles E. Merrill, 1972) ; and Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, cited in Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*, 99.
[68] Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*, 101-2.

intraparty competition.[69]

But this argument assumes that its old and new caste constituencies have held similar expectations of the BSP, that both, in other words, have looked for coethnic representation, and the associated patronage benefits. But this study shows that the BSP's Chamar base has relinquished these rewards, thereby enabling the party to accommodate upper backwards and upper castes, and that the sacrifice made by Chamars, moreover, has not cost the BSP the support of this constituency. This has been possible because of the BSP's programmatic efforts ; while the BSP has delivered programmatic benefits to the Chamar middle class, its efforts vis-à-vis the Chamar poor, while less successful, have reassured them that the party remained committed to a material agenda for the subaltern poor, and that it could be relied on to deliver on that commitment in future. Sections of the Chamar poor in the East have, furthermore, bore the costs on account of their ideological investment in the idea of the *bahujan samaj*, the understanding being that non-*bahujan* nominations constituted a route to the realization of this goal.

This suggests, first and foremost, that parties need not always rely on the same set of rewards (in Chandra's account, coethnic representation and the ensuing patronage) to satisfy old and new ethnic elites. It also warns us against dismissing the hold that the party vision may have on the base, on account of which the base may be willing to make the sacrifices necessary. For those amongst the Chamar poor who have seen multiethnic transformation as a means to *bahujan* unity, it is this goal alone that has made the burdens worthwhile.

2.4. THE PREMISE OF THE "POWERLESS BASE" CONSIDERED

There is a literature that claims that ethnic parties often choose not to distribute resources to their core bases, and that ethnic voters supporting parties that they see as their "own" often fail to derive material benefits from the accession of such parties to political office.[70] There are two factors, this literature suggests, that exonerate politicians from having to deliver material benefits to coethnics.[71]

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[69] Ibid., 260.

[70] The literature in this area includes "formal treatments of the problem," and "empirical tests in specific countries." For the first kind of research, see Gary Cox and Matthew D. McCubbins, "Electoral Politics as a Redistributive Game," *Journal of Politics* Vol. 48, No. 2 (1986) : 370-89 ; Avinash

First, if voters derive dignity gains from having coethnics in office, then politicians who depend on their support to win power are able to secure that support without delivering them resources. "This suggests that voters' affinity for [coethnic] candidates may mean that they receive fewer material benefits."[72]

Second, politicians can also take advantage of the powerlessness of coethnic constituencies, arising from the latters' lack of electoral alternatives, to direct resources away from them towards voters of whose support they remain less certain. Thus, Avinash Dixit and John Londregan argue that groups that have higher numbers of swing voters are likely to receive more, ceteris paribus.[73] And Kimuli Kasara, in yet another formulation of the powerlessness thesis, posits that in many African countries where crop production and ethnic groups remain geographically concentrated, farmers who come from a government's home area are taxed more heavily than farmers in other areas. Kasara argues that it is because these farmers have fewer alternatives that they pay higher taxes. Rulers being "better able to select and monitor influential local allies at home than they are abroad" means that "alternative candidates are less likely to emerge in a leader's home region." It is, thus, by coopting rural intermediaries in their home regions that African leaders can avoid enacting policies that benefit farmers in all regions equally, and can impose higher taxes on farmers in their "own" part of the country.[74]

The position that citizens with fewer alternatives receive fewer benefits is also consistent with Robert Bates's argument that "policies in Africa tend to be biased against the rural majority because rural people are less likely to overthrow

Dixit and John Londregan, "The Determinants of Success of Special Interests in Redistributive Politics," *Journal of Politics* Vol. 58, No. 4 (1996) : 1132-55 ; and Assar Lindbeck and Jorgen Weibull, "Balanced Budget Redistribution as the Outcome of Political Competition," *Public Choice* Vol. 52, No. 3 (1995) : 273-97. For the second, see Matz Dahlberg and Eva Johansson, "On the Vote-Purchasing Behaviour of Incumbent Governments," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 96, No. 1 (2002) : 27-40 ; Alberto Diaz-Cayeros, Beatriz Magaloni and Federico Estevez, "Electoral Risk and Redistributive Politics in Mexico and the United States" (Working Paper, Stanford University, 2003) ; Stuti Khemani, "Partisan Politics and Intergovernmental Transfers in India" (Working Paper, World Bank, 2003) ; Edward Miguel and Farhan Zaidi, "Do Politicians Reward their Supporters? Regression Discontinuity Evidence from Ghana" (Working Paper, University of California, Berkeley, 2003) ; and Kimuli Kasara, "Tax me If You Can : Ethnic Geography, Democracy and the Taxation of Agriculture in Africa," *Americal Political Science Review* Vol. 101, No. 1 (2007) : 159-72. I draw all these references from Kasara, "Tax Me If You Can," 159.
[71] My discussion of these factors relies on Kasara's. See Kasara, "Tax Me If You Can," 160-61.
[72] Ibid., 161.
[73] Dixit and Londregan, "The Determinants of Success," cited in Kasara, 161.
[74] Kasara, "Tax Me If You Can," 160.

governments than are urban dwellers." [75] It is also confirmed by findings that taxes tend to be lower in democracies, where farmers have the option of removing leaders, and in regions where there is more political competition at the local level, with alternative candidates being more likely to emerge. Again, farmers growing perennial crops tend to pay higher taxes, on account of the high costs that crop-switching entails for this group.[76] Gerard Padro i Miquel's argument that "massive presidential corruption can be explained by the fact that co-ethnic supporters are reluctant to oust rulers for fear that rival ethnic groups will take power and make them even worse off," also suggests that politicians tend to punish, rather than reward,[77] coethnic constituencies when they are relatively powerless.

The first argument, that sees psychological gains delivered to ethnic constituencies as a factor absolving coethnic elites from having to deliver them material benefits, clearly fails to apply to the transactions between the BSP leadership and the Chamar poor. That Chamar labour's support for the BSP has not been driven mainly by dignity gains is evident from the fact that the BSP has nominated mostly non-Chamar candidates since 1996. The BSP's multiethnic phase has, rather, seen Chamars *sacrifice* the dignity gains that accrue to voters from being represented by coethnics.

The Chamar poor, furthermore, do not constitute a powerless constituency. A case for their powerlessness, admittedly, could be made along the following lines. It could be argued, for instance, that Chamar labour's support for the BSP, which I explain in terms of trust, really arises on account of an absence of better alternatives. Given the psychological benefits they secure from having the BSP in power, and the material gains that the BSP's policy efforts have brought to a few amongst this constituency, it would not be unreasonable to conceive of the BSP as constituting the best option for Chamar labour, even if the party were to bring them no material

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[75] Robert H. Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa : The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1981), cited in ibid.
[76] Margaret McMillan, "Why Kill the Golden Goose? A Political Economy of a Model of Export Taxation," *Review of Economics and Statistics* Vol. 83, No. 1 (2001) : 170-84, cited in Kasara, "Tax Me If You Can," 160-61.
[77] Gerard Padro i Miquel, "The Control of Politicians in Divided Societies : The Politics of Fear," (Working Paper , 2004), cited in Kasara, "Tax Me If You Can," 161.

empowerment in the future. The BSP would, indeed, have little incentive to secure such empowerment, from this perspective.

But this argument overlooks the crucial role that Chamars, as a whole, have played in the BSP's multiethnic transformation, and the key place this transformation has occupied in the leadership's strategy for forging the *bahujan samaj*, and realizing the party's founding vision. The victory of non-*bahujan* candidates would have been impossible to pull off without Chamar support, and that the BSP remains aware of the debt it owes its Chamar base is evident from the following. First, the party has taken care to compensate Chamars for the costs of non-*bahujan* nominations (loss of dignity gains, and material patronage) by delivering them material programmatic benefits instead ; this contravenes the assumption held by the powerlessness thesis that elites will direct resources *away from* coethnic constituencies towards voters whose support remains less certain. Second, where its programmatic efforts have fallen short, as they have vis-à-vis the Chamar poor, the BSP has hastened to reassure coethnic voters of its unwavering commitment to a future material agenda, signalled by Mayawati's announcement that the party would continue to be led by a Chamar following her demise. The intention here has been to send out a message that the BSP's material commitment to the Chamar poor remains intact, non-*bahujan* nominations notwithstanding.

3. Embedded Parties and Democratization

Embeddedness as a Virtue of Parties and States

The "state in society" perspective has seen societal embeddedness as constituting a strength of states.[78] Countering the claim that a state's effectiveness is enhanced by its "disconnectedness or insulation from society," the "state in society" school has argued, on the contrary, that a "disjuncture between ... state and society.... reduce[s] a state's ability to reach into and across society to effect

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[78] For a definitive statement of this perspective, see Joel S. Migdal, "The State in Society : An Approach to Struggles for Domination," in Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, eds., *State Power and Social Forces : Domination and Transformation in the Third World* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7-34.

change." [79] Research in the fields of new institutional economics, and economic sociology, has likewise fostered the idea that it is by building ties to key social groups that states can aid the achievement of developmental targets.[80] While scholars in these fields recognize the importance of "corporate coherence," which is essential if states are not to be hijacked by self-seeking interests, they do not see insulation from societal actors as constituting an advantage. Their understanding is, rather, that states need to be "embedded in a concrete set of social ties" in order to have access to "institutionalized channels for the continual negotiation and renegotiation of goals and policies." [81]For states not only need to achieve *agreement*, or *decide* things, but also to achieve *purposes*, or *do* things.[82] And while insulation may help states decide, it cannot help them do, for doing in the last instance calls for the symbolic resource of legitimacy, which requires states to pursue the interests of, at least, some societal constituencies.[83]

The literature extolling connected states has been paralleled by a literature extolling embedded parties, that sees robust party-society ties as enhancing the legitimacy enjoyed by parties amongst constituents. Given that state-society ties in electoral democracies are mediated, first and foremost, by political parties, this perspective sees embedded parties as buttressing both intra-party democracy, as well as the democratic credentials of the political system as a whole. Embedded parties encourage intra-party democracy in that they have channels linking various layers of the party together, that allow for the communication upwards of aspirations, critiques and visions reigning below. When party leaders adjust party policies and programmes to accommodate these aspirations, critiques and visions, the party ends up representing its constituency better, and in so doing, provides them a voice at the

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[79] Atul Kohli and Vivienne Shue, "State Power and Social Forces : On Political Contention and Accommodation in the Third World," in *State Power and Social Forces,* 322.

[80] For recent research within this tradition, see Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1990) ; Robert H. Bates, *Beyond the Miracle of the Market : The Political Economy of Agrarian Development in Kenya* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1989) ; Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy : States and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1995) ; and Mark Granovetter, "Economic Action and Social Structure : The Problem of Embeddedness," *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 91, No. 3 (1985) : 481-510.

[81] Evans, *Embedded Autonomy,* 12.

[82] Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1993), 8-9.

[83] For how legitimacy enhances state capacity, see Michael Bratton, "Peasant -State Relations in Post-Colonial Africa: Patterns of Engagement and Disengagement," in *State Power and Social Forces,* 231-54.

higher levels of the polity. The absence of strong linkages between parties and voters, or the erosion of those linkages, conversely, amounts to a failure of representation, and legitimacy, at all tiers concerned.

James Manor and Atul Kohli, in their separate examinations of the Congress in India, provide a fine analysis of how the loosening of party-society ties can create a crisis of legitimacy, for the party as well as the system.[84] Manor argues that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's efforts to centralize power within the Congress, which were a response to the growing influence of state-level Congress leaders in the late 1960s, and the party's defeat in six states in the 1967 elections, led her to adopt a "'pyramidical decision-making structure,'" whereby intraparty elections were abandoned, and "[p]ositions in the Congress organization at all levels were filled by appointment from above rather than by election from below." [85] Since the Congress was the governing party in the centre, as well as in the majority of states at the time, this "new political process" severely curtailed the autonomy of state governments, and strained India's federal system.[86] Manor argues that the decay of political institutions precipitated by this centralizing drive led to a "marked decline in confidence in the state as an agency capable of creative social action," as "demonstrated by Indira Gandhi's abandonment of reformist rhetoric in the election of 1980 and of [all] serious attempts to create legislation for the betterment of society between 1980 and 1984." [87]

For, as Kohli argues, "the capacity to initiate major developmental changes from above … rest[s] on a prior capacity of leaders to institutionalize 'blocs of consensus,' or to build majority coalitions to support a specific path of change," [88] which, by lending legitimacy to party programmes, facilitates the successful implementation thereof. But consensus and legitimacy require that party legislators win elections on the basis of popular support, which in turn requires electoral nominations to be decided democratically, through bottom-up procedures of

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[84] James Manor, "Parties and the Party System," in Atul Kohli, ed., *India's Democracy : An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1988), 62-98 ; and Atul Kohli, "Centralization and Powerlessness : India's Democracy in a Comparative Perspective," in *State Power and Social Forces*, 89-107.
[85] Manor, "Parties and the Party System," 66-68, 70.
[86] Ibid., 70.
[87] Ibid., 72-73.
[88] Kohli, "Centralization and Powerlessness," 98.

decision-making. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the crucial role played by personal loyalty in the nomination process during Indira Gandhi's time robbed the Congress of its capacity to achieve developmental goals, including that of poverty alleviation, with which theme she flirted throughout the 1970s (the slogan employed was *garibi hatao*, or "remove poverty"). Likewise, it was the failure on the part of her son and successor, Rajiv Gandhi, to put together "a pro-growth coalition," that accounted for the hurdles faced by his liberalization efforts in the 1980s.[89]

Embedded Parties and Democratization

We have so far discussed how weak societal ties, by precipitating a crisis of legitimacy, can erode the capacity of parties to pursue developmental goals. But this is not the only repercussion wrought by tenuously embedded parties ; as Narendra Subramanian's analysis of Dravidian parties in South India shows, embeddedness can also have consequences for pluralist democracy. "The Dravidian movement," which emerged as "a significant political force" during the 1910s, "claimed to represent speakers of the Tamil language, perhaps all South Indians, other than those of the Brahmin caste" and "considered this imprecisely defined group the descendants of a Dravidian race, distinct from the Aryans from whom North Indians and South Indian Brahmins were said to have descended." [90] Subramanian argues that it was "because the populist features of Dravidianist ideology were more significant than its ethnic features," that "the popular impact of Dravidianist ethnic appeals was to revalue plebeian cultural norms rather than to focus political sentiments on blood ties." Dravidianist mobilization thus stood in sharp contrast to ethnic movements, "such as in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Burundi, and Sri Lanka," that sharpened ethnic boundaries and led to "widespread violence against out-groups." [91]

Explaining why the populist features of Dravidian politics emerged predominant, Subramanian argues that the "mainstay of early Dravidianist social coalitions" comprised socially capable groups, [92] that "were involved in independent

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[89] Ibid., 102-4.
[90] Narendra Subramanian, *Ethnicity and Populist Mobilization : Political Parties, Citizens, and Democracy in South India* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1999), 16.
[91] Ibid., 50-51.
[92] Ibid., 45.

associations and had somewhat formed notions of interest even before they had cast their lot with these parties." These groups rejected the movement ideology articulated by E.V. Ramaswami Naicker, leader of the early mass Dravidianist organization, the Dravida Kazhagam (DK), who "virulently opposed Brahmins and Brahmanical Hinduism," "highlighted his atheism through heretical gestures, opposed decolonization, and rejected electoral politics. " This led other leaders within the DK, who sensed that Naicker's line was likely to damage the party's growth, to initiate "a change in strategy and goals when they formed [a new party,] the DMK [Dravida Munnetra Kazagham] in 1949." [93] The DMK "redirected mass Dravidianism from a politics of heresy to a politics of community," making use of ethnic notions in a way that "highlighted the norms of middling status groups ... without promoting intolerance and ethnic violence." [94] The party, moreover, abandoned its demand for Tamil Nadu's secession from the Indian federation in 1963, and left unimplemented a bill, introduced in 1970, that sought to make Tamil the sole medium of instruction in schools in the state,[95] since the attainment of these goals would have hurt the material interests of its core supporters.

The formation of the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (ADMK) out of the DMK in 1972, followed much the same pattern. The ADMK was the more moderate and tolerant of the two parties, with the ADMK leader's articulation of Dravidianist ideology resonating better with the majority of the party base. It was, in short, the Dravidian movement's connectedness with socially capable groups that encouraged party cadres and leaders to "nurture culturally rooted, yet tolerant, visions of community," [96] and that led to the marginalization of party factions that were keen to police ethnic boundaries.

It needs to be noted, however, that while party-society ties, given an accommodative leadership, enable party policies to better reflect the visions and goals of supporters, these ties do not by themselves suffice to bolster democracy. It was because the socially capable groups that formed the mainstay of the Dravidianist coalition nurtured broad, rather than narrow, visions of community that

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[93] Ibid., 40.
[94] Ibid., 312.
[95] Ibid., 224.
[96] Ibid., 326.

embeddedness in this instance had the effect of nurturing tolerance. Whether or not embeddedness will reinforce democracy depends, in other words, on how democratic supporter aspirations are. If supporters nurture goals that breed narrow visions of community, and intolerance towards ethnic "others," then adopting those goals would cause the party to affect democratic stability in an adverse way. The link between societal embeddedness and democracy is, thus, mediated by the nature of aspirations reigning amongst a party's constituencies.

This is clearly borne out by my study of the BSP, which remains more deeply embedded in the Uttar Pradesh countryside than any other party in the state, with Chamar cadres present and active in practically every village. These ties to its Chamar base have benefitted the party a great deal, particularly when it has come to the liberation of the SC franchise. Vigilant Chamar cadres have promised SC votes to non-*bahujan* candidates running for *panchayat* office, obtaining a guarantee that SCs would be able to vote freely in parliamentary and state assembly elections, in return. But the numerical predominance of Chamars at the grassroots, and their political predominance in *panchayats* in SC-dominant villages, has also disadvantaged the BSP, particularly in the West.

The vast majority of Chamars active in *panchayat* politics have been BSP cadres ; as such, their privileging of coethnics over other SCs in the distribution of programme benefits in Western Uttar Pradesh has served to alienate non-Chamar SC communities from the party here. The West has also seen Chamars punish other subalterns for the burdens they have suffered under non-Chamar *bahujan* legislators, oppose the BSP's nomination of non-Chamar SCs in reserved constituencies, and engage in communal mobilization against Muslims, a *bahujan* constituency the BSP has strenuously tried to court.

Chamars in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, in contrast, have nurtured more inclusive conceptions of subaltern community, and related to the BSP in a less proprietary way. Chamar-dominant *panchayats* in the East have distributed benefits fairly between coethnics and others ; furthermore, in those cases where Chamar legislators have delivered patronage to coethnic constituents in reserved constituencies here, they have usually taken care to secure benefits for other subalterns as well. Chamars have also, despite facing considerably greater provocation, refrained from adopting

communal attitudes towards Muslims, and rioting against the community, unlike in the West.

Thus, while remaining equally tied to its Chamar base in both regions, the consequences of embeddedness have been different for the BSP in Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh. In the West, its ties to Chamars have prevented the party from catering to other subalterns ; in the East, in contrast, these ties have not had such a debilitating effect. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the *bahujan samaj* has come together better in Eastern Uttar Pradesh ; the BSP's attempts to broaden its subaltern base have not been constrained by Chamar hostility towards other subalterns here, as it has in the West.

This suggests that it is not embeddedness per se (which makes party elites responsive to the visions of the rank and file), that leads parties to move in democratic directions ; it is, rather, the conceptions of political community prevailing at the base which determines whether or not embedded parties will aid democratization. Where these visions are narrow and circumscribed, as amongst Chamars in Western Uttar Pradesh, its societal ties may well prevent a party from expanding its subaltern base, and empowering a larger subaltern constituency.

We have spoken of democracy in two different senses in the above discussion. Subramanian has emphasized the consequences of party-society ties for one facet of democracy, namely, the preservation of tolerance, stability, and the avoidance of violent conflict. My discussion of the BSP has, again, evoked democracy in another sense ; here, "democratization" has been seen as consisting in the flow of power downwards from the more to the less privileged, *and* its equal distribution amongst various less privileged constituencies. From this perspective, subaltern political actors who have made efforts to distribute power downwards, but who, at the same time, have sought to concentrate power within the specific communities to which they belong, and impede its flow to other less privileged groups, have been understood as obstructing democracy.

But no matter how we define democratic outcomes, the analytical point remains the same. Parties cannot further democracy, however understood, simply by maintaining ties to societal constituencies, and by accommodating their goals. The onus is, rather, on these constituencies to nurture democratic visions ; their failure to

do so can likely constrain the leadership to steer the party down a democratically damaging course.

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3

The Bahujan Samaj Party : Emergence, Mobilizational and Electoral Strategies, and Policy Efforts

This chapter has four sections. The first section places the BSP in the context of low caste mobilization in Uttar Pradesh, and delineates the circumstances that have paved the way for its emergence, and electoral success. The second section discusses the mobilizational strategies employed by the party, and argues that strategic considerations have dictated that the BSP evoke only issues of psychological empowerment in its mobilizational discourse. Having steered clear of any mention of the party's material politics, this discourse has provided little indication of the extent to which this material politics has animated the Chamar poor, and motivated them to support the party. The third section analyses the BSP's electoral strategies, and the changes that have occurred in these strategies over time ; it argues that these strategies have evolved so as to allow the party to exploit its alliances more and more to its own advantage, ie. to expand its subaltern base, and increase its numbers, so as to be able to better implement its subaltern agenda next time it was in government. The fourth section describes the policy efforts of BSP governments, undertaken in both the symbolic and material realms, and posits that the shortcomings on the material front have arisen on account of : (1) the reversal of material gains secured by the BSP by non-BSP governments ; and (2) the stiff resistance the BSP's material programmes have encountered from upper castes. The reversals and resistance, however, far from weakening the BSP's credentials in the eyes of the subaltern, have made the party an object of admiration and sympathy alike. They have drawn attention to the formidable obstacles the party has faced, and to the tenacious response it has adopted. It is this tenacity, more than anything else, that has demonstrated the party's commitment to a material agenda, and won the BSP the support of Chamar labour.

1. Low Caste Mobilization and the BSP in Uttar Pradesh

1.1. THE VERTICAL MOBILIZATION OF LOW CASTES :
THE CONGRESS AND THE BHARATIYA LOK DAL

The Congress in Uttar Pradesh managed to pass itself off as a non-ethnic, umbrella party, while catering expressly to upper castes, through the first four decades of the post-independence period. The Congress integrated SCs vertically into political structures dominated by the upper caste landed, offering them material patronage, but no leadership positions. This votebank politics, whereby the party mobilized SC votes without offering the constituency programmatic benefits or political representation, is described well by Paul R. Brass in his 1960s study. In all four rural districts that Brass studied in the state, "the leadership and the major sources of support for the local Congress organizations" were "drawn from the high caste ex-tenants of the *zamindars* and *talukdars* and from the petty and middle ex-*zamindars*," [1] in other words, from "the locally influential communities in the villages, ... those who control the land." [2] This upper caste leadership, Brass argues, facilitated the acquisition of additional support from other subordinate castes that were economically dependent on them, which made "electoral support for the Congress" far "broader than its leadership," with SCs figuring amongst the party's most reliable subaltern constituencies. [3]

Their vertical integration within party structures, combined with the factional basis of Congress politics, also prevented SCs from developing horizontal solidarities. For while faction leaders invariably came from upper castes, the ethnic heterogeneity of electoral constituencies required that they mobilize support from

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[1] Two different categories of land settlement prevailed in the United Provinces (out of which Uttar Pradesh was formed after independence) in British India. These were the *mahalwari* and *talukdari* settlements. "Under the *mahalwari* system, the local village authorities or *zamindars* (of one or more or parts of one or more villages) were recognized as the landlords of their *mahals* or estates and paid the land revenue directly to the state. Under the *talukdari* system, the local village authorities were generally ignored and the *talukdar*, who was responsible for the collection of revenue usually from a number of villages, was recognized as the landlord of an entire *taluk* (revenue collection area). Both the *zamindar* and the *talukdar* were intermediaries between the cultivator and the state ..." Paul R. Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State : The Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1965), 11. These two classes of tax-collecting intermediaries were, however, eliminated by Zamindari Abolition, undertaken by the Indian government in the 1950s, following which tenants were able to establish direct contact with the state.
[2] Ibid., 229.
[3] Ibid., 230.

across a broad spectrum of communities.[4] Congress factions were thus multiethnic in character, which, while facilitating the mobilization of new subaltern groups and their integration within the party organization, kept these groups divided on the basis of factional loyalties.[5] It was in this way, Brass argues, that the factional politics of the Congress, kept the economically deprived "from challenging the social and economic dominance of high-caste groups." [6]

Congress hegemony in Uttar Pradesh was challenged in the 1960s and 1970s by a farmers' movement that accused the party of harbouring an urban bias ; pointing to the over-representation of upper castes in the Congress, this movement also critiqued the party for impeding the ascendancy of backward caste groups. The 1960s had seen the burgeoning of a class of landowning peasants in Uttar Pradesh, whose growth resulted from "two cumulative phenomena," ie. land reform, and the Green Revolution. Land reform, "even though it had remained incomplete, enabled many [former] tenants to become peasant-proprietors" ; with most tenants coming from backward caste communities, it served to reduce the material dominance of upper castes, who had formed the vast majority of the old landowning class, in the countryside. The Green Revolution, on the other hand, stemmed "from the introduction of high-yielding seeds between 1965 and 1966," and "from the development of irrigation and the use of chemical fertilizers" ; it thus "served the interests of those among the landowners who had some investment capacity." [7]

The Green Revolution also increased the "[i]nequalities and disparities ... between the wheat growing western region and the rice growing eastern region," as "[r]ich and middle level peasants" in Western Uttar Pradesh, taking full advantage of the opportunities that it presented, doubled "their output and increased their income in many cases by 70 per cent." [8] Foremost amongst the agricultural castes whose economic ascendancy the Green Revolution facilitated were the Jats in the West. The anti-Congress mobilization of farmers that began in the 1960s was thus led by a Jat

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[4] Ibid., 56-57.
[5] Ibid., 240-43.
[6] Ibid., 243.
[7] Jaffrelot, "The Rise of the Other Backward Classes in the Hindi Belt," *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 59, No.1 (2000) : 91.
[8] Zoya Hasan, "Power and Mobilization : Patterns of Resilience and Change in Uttar Pradesh Politics," in Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, eds., *Dominance and State Power in Modern India : Decline of A Social Order* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1989), 179.

leader, Charan Singh, who left the Congress on account of its refusal to accommodate his constituency, comprising upwardly mobile agricultural communities, and most significantly, his own caste.

But Charan Singh was careful to play down his Jat identity while attempting to construct a "rural" coalition ; his need to attract small farmers led him to appeal to a *peasant* identity instead.[9] And he did, indeed, succeed in constructing a broad agrarian platform, largely on account of the cooperation of Ram Manohar Lohia, a socialist leader with a substantial base amongst the cultivating sections of backward castes, and landless labourers, in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Lohia shared Charan Singh's goal of unseating the Congress, and of reversing upper caste dominance in state politics, which led to the merger of Lohia's party, the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), with Charan Singh's own party, the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD), and the formation of the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), in 1974.[10]

But the SSP-BKD alliance was rife with contradictions, in that it glossed over the class antagonisms and social tensions characterizing relations between the various peasant categories ("landowners, tenants, sharecroppers, and laborers") that came under its umbrella, with Charan Singh, furthermore, being committed, first and foremost, to the interests of big proprietors.[11] Singh's allegiance was amply clear from his condemnation of the land grab movement launched by the SSP and the Communist Party of India (CPI),[12] and his obstruction of efforts to lower land ceilings in Uttar Pradesh, which would have freed up land for distribution to landless labour.[13] He was also opposed to the implementation of minimum wages legislation, and advocated that SC reservations be discontinued beyond the 1960s, on grounds of the inefficiency that they had bred.[14]

Charan Singh, in other words, pursued the interests of large farmers from backward castes, while using the SSP's appeal amongst small peasants and landless

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[9] Jaffrelot, "The Rise of the Other Backward Classes," 91.
[10] Christophe Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution : The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics* (New Delhi : Permanent Black, 2003), 306-07. As Jaffrelot points out, the SSP's merger with the BKD, however, took place after Lohia's death, under Raj Narain's leadership of the SSP.
[11] Jaffrelot, "The Rise of the Other Backward Classes," 92-93.
[12] Hasan, "Power and Mobilization," 182.
[13] Charan Singh, *Joint Farming X-Rayed : The Problem and the Solution* (Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1959), 90, cited in Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 284.
[14] Hasan, "Power and Mobilization," 191.

labourers, from both backward caste and SC communities, to expand his electoral base. The poorer sections of the peasantry thus served as a votebank in his scheme of politics ; they were vertically integrated into structures dominated by rich farmers, with the benefits of mobilization accruing only to the latter. It follows from this that the BLD's treatment of the agrarian poor was quite similar to the Congress's, the only difference being that the BLD represented the interests of rich backward caste, rather than upper caste, groups.

The BLD's efforts to mobilize SCs had the effect of worrying the Congress, which adopted a spate of measures to defend its low caste base. The most important of these was the distribution of surplus land freed up through the implementation of ceilings, and rural house sites, to landless SCs.[15] These programmes constituted one pillar of the populist shift effected by Indira Gandhi in the 1970s, whereby she sought to establish direct ties with the masses, in an effort to bypass the party machinery and undermine the alternative power centres that had emerged within the party organization. But the vertical networks of patronage were too deeply entrenched to be destroyed so easily ; that Mrs. Gandhi's efforts, furthermore, lacked any serious redistributive intent was also clear from her failure to ensure that allottees were able to actually take possession of plots.[16]

Neither the Congress nor the BLD, in short, had any interest in providing political representation, or programmatic benefits, to lower castes. Subaltern constituencies, as such, served only to bring these parties to power, and to allow them to pursue the interests of dominant communities, whether from upper, or backward, caste backgrounds. It was consequently, not before 1990, when the issue of reservations made the most forceful comeback to the political centre-stage since independence, and dealt a crippling blow to vertical networks, that the opportunity arose for the horizontal mobilization of lower castes.

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[15] Ibid., 192.
[16] Interview with Ashok Mishra, State Secretary, CPI, Uttar Pradesh, November 24, 2003,Lucknow.

1.2. THE "MANDAL" ISSUE AND THE HORIZONTAL MOBILIZATION OF LOW CASTES

Article 340 of the Indian Constitution recommends that the President of India nominate a Commission to investigate the condition of the "Other Backward Classes," or OBCs (those sections of the Indian populace who remain socially and educationally backward, after SCs and STs have been counted out), and suggest steps to ameliorate their backwardness. The First Backward Classes Commission, appointed in 1953 under the chairmanship of Kaka Kelkar, with a mandate to identify backward classes and propose measures to improve their condition, relied on the concept of caste to define backwardness. The Kelkar Commission's report was rejected by Jawaharlal Nehru's Congress government, which argued that the use of the caste criterion would serve to perpetuate existing caste distinctions. The Second Backward Classes Commission was appointed in 1979 under the chairmanship of B.P. Mandal ; like the Kelkar Commission before it, the Mandal Commission argued that OBCs were coterminous with low castes, and further, that their backwardness justified a quota of 27 percent. These recommendations were ignored by the Congress governments of both Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi ; it made little sense for the Congress to alienate its upper caste constituency by implementing quotas for backwards. But the Janata Dal (JD) government that came to power in 1989 had a significant Lohiaite component ; this government made the Commission's report public, with the JD Prime Minister, V.P. Singh, going on to implement the recommendations in 1990.[17]

Coming on top of the 22.5 percent quota for SCs and STs, the OBC quota of 27 percent brought the total percentage of reservations to 49.5 percent, which drew vehement protests from upper castes. The storm over OBC quotas also revived the debate around reservations in general, with upper caste student organizations demanding that SC quotas be abolished as well.[18] Thus, the Mandal affair not only nurtured the crystallization of an OBC identity, but also created a new polarization around forward and backward caste categories, which made it impossible for the Congress to hold its earlier coalition of upper castes and SCs together. The exclusion

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[17] Jaffrelot, "The Rise of the Other Backward Classes," 87-88, 94.
[18] Ibid., 97.

of Jats from the list of OBCs also precipitated the collapse of the BLD's alliance,[19] the players in which now found themselves on opposite sides of the caste divide. The divide between Jat leaders, on the one hand, and V.P. Singh, on the other, was clearly signalled by the resignation of Devi Lal, a Jat politician, who had been part of the JD government.[20]

In this new scenario, the BJP emerged as the representative of the social strata threatened by reservations, namely, upper castes, while the SP and the BSP emerged as champions of reservations, and representatives of the OBCs and SCs, respectively.[21] The momentum provided by the Mandal issue was used by Kanshi Ram, the BSP's founder, not only to mobilize SCs, but also to demonstrate solidarity with the OBC cause. Kanshi Ram had, in fact, emphasized the claims of OBCs much prior to 1990, arguing that SCs were much better-off in some respects than OBCs, and especially, lower backwards. For the reservations granted to SCs had allowed them a larger presence in the bureaucracy, and hence a greater share in government and administration. The BSP accordingly engineered the slogan : *Mandal ayog lagu karo, kursi khali karo* (Implement Mandal or vacate the seat).[22] The BSP thus sought to use the political climate of the early 1990s both to appeal to SCs, and signal its sympathies for *bahujans* as a whole.

To sum up, the implementation of OBC quotas, by triggering a conservative upper caste backlash in Uttar Pradesh, helped the hardening of lower caste identities in the state. This provided an ideal climate for the "ethnification" of the party system, whereby caste-based parties emerged that explicitly called on voters to support their "own." [23] This marked a clear break from the politics of the Congress

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[19] Jats were, however, included in the state list of OBCs in the year 2000, following their successful lobbying of the BJP government under Ram Prakash Gupta.

[20] Jaffrelot, "The Rise of the Other Backward Classes," 96-97.

[21] Mulayam Singh Yadav, the founder of the SP, hailed from the Lohiaite wing of the BLD ; following Lohia, he supported caste-based reservations, which pitted him against the Jat faction of the party. Following Charan Singh's death, however, Mulayam Singh won the leadership contest within the BLD, his main rival in that race being Ajit Singh, Charan Singh's son, and political heir. While still with the BLD, Mulayam Singh became Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh (1989-1991), after which stint he left that party, and founded the SP.

[22] Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Bahujan Samaj Party in North India : No Longer Just a Dalit Party?" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* Vol. 53, No. 1 (1998) : 38-39.

[23] I borrow the term "ethnification" from Kanchan Chandra. See Chandra, "Post-Congress Politics in Uttar Pradesh : The Ethnification of the Party System and its Consequences," in Ramashray Roy and Paul Wallace, eds., *Indian Politics and the 1998 Election : Regionalism, Hindutva and the State* (New Delhi : Sage, 1999), 55-104

and the BLD, which relied on multicaste alliances to come to power, and which used lower caste constituencies to serve the interests of upper castes and upper backwards, respectively. The adoption of the Mandal Commission's recommendations, thus, precipitated the collapse of vertical linkages tying upper and lower castes together, consequently paving the way for the horizontal mobilization of lower castes in the state.

2. The BSP's Mobilizational Strategies

2.1 "BAHUJAN" AS A MOBILIZATIONAL CATEGORY

The BSP takes its name from the Hindi term *bahujan*, meaning "majority of the people," and claims to represent the *bahujan samaj*, or "the community of those who constitute the majority." The BSP depicts the *bahujan samaj* as a coalition of Hindu low castes and religious minorities,[24] with this depiction turning on a binary that sees Hindu upper castes as constituting its political and ideological "other."

Both tactical and ideological considerations prompted Kanshi Ram to adopt the *bahujan* motif for mobilizational purposes. Kanchan Chandra argues that "the Scheduled Caste population [alone] was not sufficient to put a new political party in power in any state in India in 1984 [the year of the BSP's birth], with three exceptions : Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. And even in these states, the Scheduled Caste population was large enough not necessarily to assure victory, but to barely permit a political party with Scheduled Caste support to cross the *minimum* threshold necessary..."[25] Given this limitation, it made strategic sense for Kanshi Ram to "enlarge the definition of his 'own' ethnic category."[26] With SCs making up 16.2 percent of the Indian population, STs 8.2 percent, OBCs 52 percent, and religious minorities 19.5 percent, it was not unreasonable to see these constituencies, taken together, as capable of delivering a majority.[27] Winning elections, therefore,

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[24] Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed : Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2004), 15.

[25] Ibid., 147-48.

[26] Ibid., 149.

[27] All figures, except those for the OBCs, are from the *Census of India, 2001*. The Indian Census does not provide a OBC count ; however, the Mandal Commission Report estimated the OBC population to be around 52 percent. *Mandal Commission Report of the Backward Classes Commission 1980* (Delhi : Akalank Publications, 1980), cited in ibid.

was an important consideration that guided Kanshi Ram's choice of name for his party. [28]

The motif of the *bahujan samaj* also allowed the BSP to communicate its social justice agenda to its target constituency. Kanshi Ram would often employ a discourse of "85 percent versus 15 percent," where 85 percent represented the *bahujans*, and 15 percent the upper castes. Though imprecise, these figures were effective in conveying the injustice that the BSP saw as characterizing the Indian political situation, in which the minority ruled over, oppressed and exploited the majority. The discourse of injustice, and the pressing need to reverse it, took on a peculiar potency when symbolized through the simple "metaphor of the ball-pen, repeated endlessly by Kanshi Ram on platforms or before the cameras," the top of the pen representing the upper castes who, despite being in a minority, rule the country, with the pen itself representing "the remaining 85% who have to become aware of their fate and of their numerical strength." [29]

This majoritarian and polarizing discourse was a pervasive feature of the BSP's early politics, with Kanshi Ram often beginning "his public speeches with an injunction to the upper castes … [present] to leave the meeting place." [30] This discourse also informed the slogans engineered by the BSP in the 1980s and early 1990s : *Jiski jitni sankhya bhari, uski utni bhagidari* (The larger one's numbers, the greater ought to be one's representation) ; and *85 par 15 ka raj nahi chalega, nahi chalega* (The rule of 15 percent over 85 percent cannot last, cannot last).[31]

Despite its promise, however, the *bahujan samaj* did not prove to be a useful mobilizational category. This was for three reasons. First, "[t]he term '[b]ahujan' had … [little] political resonance in India in the 1980s," with "the socio-economic, cultural, and historical disparities" between the various categories of *bahujans* hindering their political unity.[32] Second, Kanshi Ram had relied on BAMCEF cadres to spread "an ideology that married the concerns of Scheduled Castes with the other categories included in the 'Bahujan Samaj' and to produce a pool of ideologically

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[28] Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*, 149.
[29] Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 396-97.
[30] Ibid., 397, n. 31.
[31] For the original Hindi slogans, see *Kanshi Ram, Bahujan Samaj ke liye Asha ki Kiran* (New Delhi : Bahujan Publications, 1992), 67, cited in ibid., 397 (translation mine).
[32] Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*, 149-50.

trained men who could then mobilize support for the BSP among the broader population." But there was a nation-wide split in the BAMCEF in 1985, which precipitated the exit of a large number of ideologically trained cadres ; the BSP, as a result, lost an important part of "the infrastructure on which it had relied for the construction," [33] and spread, of a *bahujan* identity. And third, the BAMCEF and the BSP, in their efforts to weld together the different constituents of the *bahujan samaj*, emphasized their "common experience of humiliation at the hands of upper caste Hindus." [34] But the narrative of humiliation failed to strike the same chord with backwards and Muslims as it did with SCs,[35] amongst whom it had special resonance. For SCs had not only suffered the practice of untouchability, but had also been cheated and degraded by the Congress.

2.2. THE DISCOURSE OF HUMILIATION

The theme of humiliation was too crucial an instrument of SC mobilization to be abandoned so early on. For it was the stick that the BSP chose to beat the Congress with, and the argument that it used to wean SC votes away from that party. It needs to be emphasized here that the Congress constituted the BSP's main ideological enemy, and strategic competition. The ideological enmity between the two parties could be traced back to the debate that took place between Gandhi and Ambedkar prior to the conclusion of the Poona Pact in 1932. This debate mirrored their clashing perspectives on the ideal terms of SC participation in the post-1947 political order ; while Ambedkar preferred a system of separate electorates, on the grounds that this would allow SCs to elect their own representatives, and would furthermore make SC legislators answerable to the SC constituencies voting them into power, Gandhi, and the Hindu traditionalists within the Congress, on the other hand, favoured a system of joint electorates cum reservations, whereby SC candidates alone would contest elections in those constituencies in which SCs were numerically preponderant.[36] The logic behind joint electorates was that SCs were "part and parcel

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[33] Ibid., 150.
[34] Ibid., 27.
[35] Ibid., 39.
[36] Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 92-97.

of the Hindu community," [37] and that separate electorates would foster divisiveness, and amount to a second "partition of the country," this time on caste lines. [38]

The Poona Pact settled the dispute decisively in favour of Gandhi. Given that SCs were not in a majority in most reserved constituencies (they only comprised a substantial section of the population therein), and given the operation moreover of a "first past the post" electoral system, it was possible for a SC candidate to win in a reserved constituency on the strength of non-SC votes alone. And it was indeed through the selective mobilization of non-SC votes that the Congress got its SC candidates elected for the most part, thereby ensuring that SC politicians elected on Congress tickets toed the party line, and remained attentive to upper caste interests. [39] The Poona Pact, Kanshi Ram thus argued, made *chamchas* (sycophants) of SC politicians ; having been voted into power by upper castes, they owed their primary allegiance to upper caste constituencies. [40]

SC leaders coopted by the Congress, furthermore, rarely succeeded in making any progress upwards within the party apparatus ; the leadership positions within the Congress were all occupied by upper castes. [41] The Congress, in other words, offered no coethnic representation to SC constituencies ; it was only through the delivery of material patronage that it succeeded in securing their support. Material patronage, the BSP thus argued, was the carrot that the Congress had used to get SC votes, while stifling the growth of SC leadership within the party. This representation deficit, in turn, had fostered a state of psychological slavery amongst SCs ; this alone explains their willingness to support an upper caste leadership that had used them so blatantly for its own political gains, and that had remained, furthermore, so committed to perpetuating caste inequalities within the political order .

The only way out of this cycle of powerlessness was for SCs to support coethnics nominated by the BSP ; supporting SC candidates nominated by the Congress would not help, since they would only function as stooges for upper castes.

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[37] Speech by K.M. Munshi, delivered on August 27, 1947, *Constituent Assembly Debates* (New Delhi : Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1989), Vol. 5, 227, cited in ibid., 93.
[38] Speech by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, delivered on August 28, 1947, *Constituent Assembly Debates*, Vol. 5, 272, cited in Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 95.
[39] Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 96-97.
[40] Kanshi Ram, *The Chamcha Age : An Era of the Stooges* (New Delhi : Bahujan Publications, 1982).
[41] Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 101.

Representation by one's "own" candidate, and party, was thus a recurrent theme in the BSP's early mobilizational discourse ; the party argued that this alone could reverse the psychological humiliation SCs had suffered by virtue of their vertical integration within Congress structures. As for material benefits, these did not suffice to secure psychological emancipation ; the Congress had, after all, relied on material handouts to keep its SC votebank intact. These handouts had proved anything but empowering, having lulled SCs into accepting a degrading status quo, and having kept them from demanding a just bargain from the party.

I argue that the BSP's emphasis on psychological emancipation, and its devaluation of material empowerment, served two strategic purposes in the 1980s and early 1990s. First, it served to differentiate the BSP from the Congress, at a time when the BSP had just entered the electoral arena, and was trying to attract the attention of SC voters, most of whom were committed to the other party. And second, it served to neutralize the disadvantage that the BSP suffered vis-à-vis the Congress in the material realm. For the Congress, being the ruling party, had access to patronage resources that the BSP lacked ; the BSP, as such, could ill afford to compete with the Congress so far as the delivery of material benefits went.[42]

2.3. THE CHANGING MEANING OF REPRESENTATION

The issues of humiliation and representation were, of course, tied together, in that the BSP saw representation as the route by which to overcome the problem of humiliation. But the BSP could not offer SCs any representation in its initial phase, since representation depended on electoral victory. It was only after the theme of humiliation had served to draw SC support away from the Congress, and helped the BSP establish an initial foothold in Uttar Pradesh, that the party started winning seats, and offering SCs representation benefits flowing from the election of coethnics. It attests to the power of the humiliation discourse that it succeeded in

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[42] Kanchan Chandra, "The Transformation of Ethnic Politics in India : The Decline of Congress and the Rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Hoshiarpur," *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 59, No. 1 (2000) : 38. Chandra argues that the BSP's use of the issue of humililation, during its early phase of mobilization in the state of Punjab, amounted to a "clever political strategy," since it would have been difficult for it to unseat the Congress, which was in power in the state, by promising material benefits. The same argument applies to the early BSP in Uttar Pradesh.

drawing SC voters towards the BSP, despite the party's inability to offer them any credible guarantee of victory.

A while after the BSP had won "an initial critical mass of votes" amongst SCs, and "established itself as a viable contender for power in the next election," it moved beyond nominating SCs, to putting up non-SC (first *bahujan*, and later, non-*bahujan*) candidates. Chandra thus argues that "[a]lthough the power of the promise of political representation...[came] at first from its framing in the narrative of humiliation, it ultimately ...[transcended] this narrative," and that once the BSP looked like being in a position to win, "[t]he naked power of political representation ...[was] then sufficient to attract new ethnic categories." Non-SC voters, in other words, proved ready to support the party once SC votes had amassed behind it.[43]

The nomination of non-SCs was also especially interesting from the point of view of the representation that the BSP now secured for SCs, and especially Chamars. When the BSP had promised SCs representation in its initial phase, it had referred to the dignity gains flowing from the election of coethnics. These dignity gains had also been accompanied by material patronage, secured by SC legislators for their coethnic constituents, though talk of this patronage had never surfaced in the BSP's mobilizational discourse. Following the large-scale nomination of non-SCs, and especially non-*bahujans*, however, the BSP's SC constituencies found themselves robbed of coethnic representation, and the associated dignity gains and material patronage. Given the crucial part played by this sacrifice in facilitating the BSP's multiethnic turn, they were compensated by material benefits delivered to them on a programmatic basis. The meaning attached to representation thus came full circle, from psychological benefit to material gain.

But the BSP made no mention of material benefits while mobilizing SCs in its multiethnic phase. It was in order to create a level playing field between the Congress and itself that the party had steered clear of raising material issues earlier, when it was new to the electoral arena, and had no access to state resources. But after having formed the government a few times, and having directed programmatic benefits to its *bahujan* constituency, it was for different reasons that it avoided discussing its material politics. For the BSP's programmatic efforts, especially those

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[43] Ibid., 39.

targeting the *bahujan* poor, had met with severe resistance, both from upper caste sections of the bureaucracy, and landed castes in the countryside. Non-BSP governments, furthermore, had reversed some of the gains secured by SCs during BSP rule (the SP had withdrawn quota-filling orders issued by the BSP, while the BJP had amended the provisions of the SC/ST Act). Taken together, the reversals and the resistance had made the material gains delivered by BSP governments halting and fragile, leaving the party little opportunity for mobilizing on material grounds.

But its material efforts, and the sacrifices made by cadres while fighting upper caste opposition, had convinced the Chamar poor (and in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, the *bahujan* poor) that the BSP remained committed to a material agenda. This had led them to nurture material expectations of the party, and to vote for it on the strength of those expectations. The BSP's mobilizational discourse, thus, provided little indication of the party's material commitments, and of the material rationale that had led the ethnic poor to vote for it, particularly in its multiethnic phase.

3. The BSP's Electoral Strategies

3.1. DAMAGING THE CONGRESS

The period 1984 -1992 saw the BSP contest elections by itself, without the aid of alliances, in Uttar Pradesh. The point of the BSP's electoral politics in this phase was to damage the Congress, rather than win seats itself. Kanshi Ram calculated that if SC candidates running on BSP tickets succeeded in hurting the Congress in some prominent seats, then this would help attract SC attention to the party, and drive home the point that the Congress was not invincible. This strategy led the BSP to contest some highly publicized by-elections that pitted its candidates against Congress bigwigs, as well as politicians whom Kanshi Ram branded as stooges. Thus, Mayawati took on Meera Kumar, prominent Congress leader and daughter of Jagjivan Ram, a Congress *chamcha*, in the by-election held in Bijnor parliamentary constituency in December 1985 ; she also ran against Ram Vilas Paswan, a SC politician from the JD, in the parliamentary by-election held in the

reserved seat of Hardwar in March 1987.[44] Meera Kumar won with a narrow margin of 5000 votes, while Mayawati stood second ; the Congress's victory margin in Bijnor a year back, it may be noted, had been 95,000 votes.[45] In Hardwar, again, Mayawati emerged as the runner-up, while Paswan stood fourth and lost his deposit.[46]

1987 also saw Kanshi Ram himself contest a by-election in Allahabad parliamentary constituency, where his opponents were Sunil Shastri, Congress nominee and ex-Congress Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's son, and V. P. Singh, the joint candidate of the opposition to the Congress. V. P. Singh won expectedly by a heavy margin, but it was a victory to which Kanshi Ram contributed in no small measure, having diverted no less than 71,586 votes away from the Congress.[47] The BSP had also changed the outcome of the state assembly elections held earlier, in 1985, where it had contributed to the Congress's defeat in 51 seats.[48] In Kanshi Ram's own words, the BSP's goal at this stage was to not to win, but to demonstrate its strength.[49] It was only following such a demonstration, he predicted, that electoral success would come.

He was proved right ; the BSP won 13 seats in the state assembly elections, and 2 seats in the parliamentary elections, held in 1989. It also won 13 seats in the state assembly elections of 1991, and 1 seat in the parliamentary elections held that year. Its performance in the 1991 assembly elections was especially remarkable, given the BJP's massive attempts to polarize the electorate on religious lines.[50]

3.2. PRE-ELECTORAL ALLIANCES

I have argued that the BSP has seen power less as an end, than as a means with which to expand its support, and enhance its strength. Power has been valued because it has presented an opportunity for the party to implement its subaltern

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[44] Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution : The Bahujan Samaj Party in North India* (New Delhi : Sage, 2002), 156.

[45] Abhay Kumar Dubey, "Anatomy of a Power Player : A Study of Kanshi Ram," in Ghanshyam Shah, ed., *Dalit Identity and Politics : Cultural Subordination and the Dalit Challenge* (New Delhi : Sage, 2001), Vol. 2, 300.

[46] Pai, *Dalit Assertion*, 156.

[47] Dubey, "Anatomy of a Power Player," 300.

[48] *Times of India* (New Delhi), April 2, 1987, cited in Pai, *Dalit Assertion*, 156.

[49] *Indian Express* (New Delhi), July 1, 1989, cited in Pai, *Dalit Assertion*, 156.

[50] Pai, *Dalit Assertion*, 157.

agenda, and consolidate its subaltern base, the expectation being that this would allow it to administer that agenda still better, and consolidate that base still further, next time it was in government. Thus, it did not make sense for the BSP to wait till it had won a significant number of seats before making a bid for power ; rather, its philosophy dictated that it use whatever strength it commanded to participate in government at the earliest possible juncture.[51]

It was this understanding that guided the BSP's seat-sharing arrangement with the SP, forged prior to the 1993 state assembly elections. The SP won 109 out of a total of 425 seats, while the BSP won 67.[52] While the resulting SP-BSP government was seen in most quarters as a secular alliance (it was propped up by the Congress, who saw this as the best way to keep the BJP, the party of Hindutva, at bay), Kanshi Ram made it clear that he had joined forces with the SP only to be able to get a hold on power.[53]

The alliance was, however, soon besieged by a host of problems, the most important of which pertained to the SP's encroaching on BSP legislators and voters. The SP out-performed the BSP by a significant margin in the 1995 *panchayat* elections,[54] but was reported to have frequently passed off its candidates as belonging to the BSP, in an attempt to take advantage of the loyalty the BSP commanded amongst SCs at the grassroots.[55] Mulayam Singh, the Chief Minister and SP leader, also triggered the defection of BSP legislators to his own party at regular intervals, in an effort to undermine the BSP's position within the government.[56]

Kanshi Ram finally withdrew support in June 1995, and soon after, accepted the BJP's offer to prop up a BSP-led government. In response to the outcry that the BSP had acted opportunistically in allying with the BJP, a fundamentalist party, Kanshi Ram replied that the two parties had no understanding on issues, and no

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[51] Interview with BAMCEF official, February 26, 2004, Muzaffarnagar.
[52] Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 409.
[53] Kanshi Ram, interview in *Sunday*, May 16, 1993, 10-11, cited in ibid.
[54] Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 412-13.
[55] Venkitesh Ramakrishnan, "Toppling to Conquer : A Coalition of Competing Ambitions," *Frontline*, June 30, 1995, 12.
[56] Amaresh Mishra, "Limits of OBC-Dalit Politics," *Economic And Political Weekly* Vol. 30, No. 22 (June 1995) : 1356, cited in Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 413 ; Jaffrelot, "The Bahujan Samaj Party in North India," 44.

common minimum programme,[57] and that his primary concern in having accepted the BJP's offer was to advance the BSP's own agenda.[58]

Mayawati, upon acceding to the post of Chief Minister in 1995, played a critical role in consolidating SC, and specifically, Chamar, support.[59] The media in Uttar Pradesh has made much of Mayawati's symbolic politics – her renaming of universities and districts after low caste leaders, and her construction of statues and parks to commemorate them. And when they have discussed her material programmes, for instance, the AVP, they have focussed on the " waste of expenditure," and the "inefficiency" that these have entailed. But very little has been said about the obstacles she has faced in implementing these programmes ; it was, indeed, with an eye to minimizing these obstacles that she took to transferring SC officials to crucial administrative posts immediately upon forming the government. For the BSP predicted that it would not take the BJP long to withdraw support, once it realized that the BSP's politics was hurting its own upper caste constituency. The BSP's plan was, thus, to get as much done, as fast as possible ; it was only then that its stint in power could be understood to have paid off.[60]

Resistance notwithstanding, the BSP succeeded in adopting measures that signalled its material agenda to the subaltern poor ; Mayawati extended AVP benefits to SC hamlets in upper caste- and OBC-dominant villages, brought backward Muslims within the ambit of state-level reservations, and included some poor backward castes, that had been left out of the initial list of OBCs, within it.[61] The results were evident in the 1996 parliamentary elections ; the BSP doubled its vote share from 10 percent in the 1993 state assembly elections to 20.6 percent, winning 6 parliamentary seats in the state.[62]

The BJP, as predicted, withdrew support in October 1995, leading to the collapse of the government. The run-up to the 1996 state assembly elections saw the Congress approach the BSP with an offer of a seat-sharing arrangement. The Congress-BSP coalition that ensued was a highly symbolic one, with the Congress

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[57] Vivek Kumar, "The Power of Strategy," *Dalit*, May 2002, 15.
[58] Kanshi Ram, interview in *Frontline*, June 28, 1996, 35.
[59] Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 414-15.
[60] Interview with BAMCEF official, February 26, 2004, Muzaffarnagar.
[61] Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 415-16.
[62] Ibid., 417.

playing the role of a junior partner in an alliance with a SC party. [63] But like all of the BSP's alliances, this one too was concluded on strategic grounds, with the BSP calculating that the alliance would allow it to form the government, and capture the Congress's remaining SC vote.[64] But no party or coalition won an absolute majority in the elections, following which President's Rule was imposed in Uttar Pradesh in October 1996.[65]

The BSP did, however, learn some lessons from its alliance with the Congress. First, while the BSP's SC base proved ready to support Congress candidates, the Congress's upper caste base was far less willing to support the lower caste candidates running on BSP tickets. Second, the BSP also suffered organizationally from the alliance. BSP party workers were not required to campaign in those constituencies from where the Congress contested the polls, which demoralized cadres, and dampened enthusiasm. Third, the seat-sharing arrangement made it difficult for the BSP to evaluate its strength in the state as a whole ; it had no way of gauging its support levels in seats that went to the Congress's kitty.[66] Its earlier experience with the SP had also driven home one further disadvantage of pre-electoral alliances to the BSP ; since seat-sharing schemes did not allow the party to make the most of its organizational strength, and win as many seats as it could have otherwise, it served to reduce its bargaining power within a coalition, and hamper its ability to implement its subaltern agenda.[67] All these consideration, taken together, informed the BSP's decision not to enter pre-electoral alliances again.

3.3. POST-ELECTORAL ALLIANCES AND
NON-BAHUJAN NOMINATIONS

March 1997 saw the formation of a second BSP-BJP alliance, with the BJP accepting the BSP's offer to form a coalition "with any political force willing and able to allocate the Chief Ministership to Mayawati." [68] A power rotation scheme was devised ; it was decided that each party would "form the government for six months

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[63] Jaffrelot, "The Bahujan Samaj Party in North India," 48.
[64] Kanchan Chandra and Chandrika Parmar, "Party Strategies in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 32, No. 5 (February 1997) : 216, cited in ibid, 48.
[65] Jaffrelot, "The Bahujan Samaj Party in North India," 48.
[66] Interview with BAMCEF official, February 20, 2004, Muzaffarnagar.
[67] Ibid. ; Kumar, "The Power of Strategy," 14-15.
[68] Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 418.

under its own leader, supported by the other party from outside." [69] The BSP insisted on forming the government first ; the BSP leadership calculated that the BJP's thirst for power would prevent it from withdrawing support during the first six months, since it was only after this period that the BJP would be able to rule. This would give the BSP enough time to implement its own agenda, and moreover allow it to bring the BJP government down, should it adopt any measures that threatened the interests of the BSP's subaltern base. It was by taking advantage of the BJP's desperation to govern that the BSP was able to impose its own terms on that party, and rule first, despite its smaller numbers. (The BSP had only 67 MLAs, whereas the BJP had 174.)[70]

Assured that it would be in power for six months, the Mayawati government adopted measures in the material realm that were bolder than those taken earlier. The most controversial step the BSP took was to enforce possession of plots that had been handed out to subalterns by earlier governments, but that had been forcibly taken over by landed castes. This required the BSP to crack down on illegal cultivation in the countryside, a programme that met with fierce resistance from upper castes.[71] The BSP's other measure that provoked the wrath of upper caste communities was its strict implementation of the SC/ST Act. This measure helped tilt the material balance of power in favour of SC agricultural labour, who could now agitate for higher wages without facing any punitive action from employers.[72]

Apart from helping the BSP consolidate subaltern support, these measures also had the effect of alienating the BJP's upper caste base from that party. Thakurs, the upper caste community most hurt by BSP programmes, saw the BJP as incapable of protecting their interests even as it participated in government, which led them to shift to the SP. Brahmins, the BJP's other upper caste constituency, now perceived the BJP as a sinking ship, and in turn embraced the BSP. The BSP, therefore, played a crucial role in decimating the BJP, an upper caste party, in Uttar Pradesh, and in

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[69] Pai, *Dalit Assertion,* 178.
[70] Interview with BAMCEF official, February 20, 2004, Muzaffarnagar.
[71] Interviews with *patwaris* responsible for fieldwork villages in Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts, April-August, 2004.
[72] Interviews with upper caste and Chamar respondents in Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts, April-August, 2004.

initiating a dynamic that forced upper castes to turn to electoral vehicles representing OBCs and SCs for representation.[73]

It was, indeed, in an attempt to save face before upper castes that Kalyan Singh, the BJP Chief Minister, amended the provisions of the SC/ST Act when he assumed power, following six months of BSP rule. The BJP argued that SCs were using the Act to harass upper castes, and that the charges they brought were often fabricated, with SCs furthermore using the Act to benefit from the financial compensation that it provided to victims.[74] The Government Order issued by Singh accordingly stipulated that the accused was no longer to be jailed while the charges were being investigated, and the plaintiff was no longer to receive money to help him fight the case in court.[75] The BSP's response was prompt ; Mayawati immediately withdrew support. Having served its term, and achieved what it had to, the BSP saw no reason to back the BJP as it turned its back on subalterns.

The results of the 1998 parliamentary elections were, however, disappointing in that the BSP's performance improved only marginally, relative to its showing in the parliamentary elections of 1996.[76] The results indicated that the party had reached a plateau vis-a-vis *bahujan* support, and that any further expansion in its *bahujan* base would depend on its delivering significantly more, programmatically speaking, to those subaltern voters who were still holding out. The need for more action on the programmatic front signalled, furthermore, that the party had to win a majority, or at the least, emerge as a dominant coalition partner, with the arithmetic in its favour. It is against the background of this dilemma that we need to understand the BSP's non-*bahujan* turn. The nomination of non-*bahujans* on a large scale was seen

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[73] BJP cadres in Jaunpur and Azamgarh were very bitter about the leadership's decision to ally with the BSP in 1997. The following remark reflects the demoralization they suffered following the forging of the alliance. "These big leaders sit in Delhi and think they know everything. They know nothing of what is happening here, in the districts. The alliance with the BSP was a bad idea… it has ruined the party. The Thakurs are very angry, they will not be voting for us. Ideologically also, the BJP is very different from the BSP. So why did we have to ally with them?" Interview with BJP cadre, June 3, 2004, Jaunpur.

[74] Venkitesh Ramakrishnan, "Divided They Rule," *Frontline*, October 4, 1997 ; Interview with BJP cadre, June 3, 2004, Jaunpur.

[75] Jens Lerche, "Politics of The Poor : Agricultural Labourers and Political Transformations in Uttar Pradesh," *Journal of Peasant Studies* Vol. 26, No. 2 (1999) : 215.

[76] The BSP received 20.9 percent of votes in Uttar Pradesh in the 1998 parliamentary elections, as compared to 20.6 percent in the 1996 parliamentary elections. It also won fewer seats in 1998, ie. 4, as compared to 6 in 1996. Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 399, Table 11.2.

as the only strategy that would allow the party to move beyond the plateau, and increase its numbers, in the immediate term.

The BSP had already nominated some non-*bahujan* candidates in the 1996 parliamentary and state assembly elections, and in the 1998 parliamentary elections.[77] But the party's failure to improve its performance over this two-year period pointed to a need for more aggressive campaigning amongst upper castes. The 1999 parliamentary elections thus saw the BSP adopt the slogan of the *sarvajan samaj* (the all-inclusive community), to signal its willingness to widen its platform beyond lower castes. Of the 85 tickets the BSP awarded in 1999, 10 went to upper castes, 38 to OBCs,[78] 17 to Muslims, and 20 to SCs. "The basic strategy was to evolve a constituency-specific 'winning caste combination,'" ie. nominate non-*bahujan* candidates where the non-*bahujan* community in question had a substantial presence, so that their votes, combined with the *bahujan* vote, and the Chamar vote in particular, would suffice to see the candidate through.[79] This strategy, together with Mayawati's aggressive campaigning, yielded rich dividends ; the BSP increased both its vote share (22.1 percent) and number of seats (14), relative to 1998.

Non-*bahujan* nominations, it needs to be noted here, served a second purpose, over and above increasing the BSP's tally of legislators. SCs in Uttar Pradesh had been prevented by landed castes from casting their vote for much of the post-independence period ; the BSP's point, in nominating non-*bahujans*, was thus to get those same sections that had so far subverted the SC franchise, to now help free it. For it was primarily on the strength of the committed SC vote that non-*bahujans* running on BSP tickets got elected ; while they received some support from coethnics, this hardly sufficed on its own to bring victory. These candidates thus had a vested interest in facilitating a free and fair exercise of the SC franchise, paving way

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[77] Chandra, "Post-Congress Politics in Uttar Pradesh," 71.

[78] The OBC category, it should be noted, includes both upper and lower backwards. Most studies of the BSP's nomination trends do not show how tickets were distributed within the OBC category. The same problem arises with respect to SC nominations ; the composite data fails to show how tickets were distributed between Chamars and other SCs. Chapters 4 and 5 provide data pertaining to the intra-OBC and intra-SC break-up of tickets over the years, with respect to some specific constituencies in Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh.

[79] Sudha Pai, "BSP's New Electoral Strategy Pays Off," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 34, No. 44 (October 1999) : 3100.

for a situation in which, as Kanshi Ram put it, the same forces that had captured booths now took SCs to the polling station.[80]

The 2002 state assembly elections saw the BSP nominate a large number of non-*bahujan* candidates (it granted 91 tickets to upper castes, and 126 to OBCs ; of the remaining 184 tickets, 86 went to Muslims, and 98 to SCs),[81] and improve upon its performance in the 1996 state assembly elections (it increased its vote share from 20 percent to 22.8 percent, and number of seats from 67 to 98).[82] In so far as this improved performance allowed the BSP to dominate its ensuing alliance with the BJP, which had won 88 seats, and emerge as the senior partner in a coalition for the first time, non-*bahujan* nominations may be understood to have achieved their purpose.

Governing from a position of strength, the BSP government pushed its land distribution agenda much harder, and broke fresh ground in the realm of law and order, placing upper caste criminals, and land mafia, including some affiliated to the BJP, behind bars. This once again hurt the BJP, driving the remnants of its upper caste base away from the party. As such, when the BSP-BJP alliance ended in August 2003, following the initiation of corruption charges against Mayawati, and her consequent resignation,[83] SC voters believed that the allegations were false, and that they had been levelled by the BJP-led government in Delhi to punish Mayawati for the damage she had inflicted on the party in Uttar Pradesh.[84]

The BSP's programmatic record, and the sympathy evoked by the attack against Mayawati, led to a massive consolidation of SC votes behind the party in the

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[80] Kanshi Ram, cited in Kumar, "The Power of Strategy," 14.

[81] BSP State Unit, Lucknow.

[82] A.K. Verma, "UP Assembly Elections : Caste Dominates Ideology," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 37, No. 21 (May 2002) : 1977

[83] The corruption charges were made in relation to the Taj Corridor case, which accused the Uttar Pradesh government of having sanctioned a project to create a commercial corridor on the banks of the Yamuna, adjacent to the Taj Mahal, overlooking the impact that the ensuing environmental damage would have on the monument. The Chief Minister was also accused of having received kickbacks from the contracts awarded in relation to the project

[84] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts, April-August, 2004 ; V.B. Singh and A.K. Verma, "BJP the real loser, Congress the real winner," *Hindu*, May 20, 2004. Drawing on the results of the National Election Survey (NES), conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi, in 2004, Singh and Verma point out that only 5 percent of BSP voters interviewed believed Mayawati was guilty.

2004 parliamentary elections.[85] The BSP's nomination of non-*bahujans* (the party awarded 20 tickets to upper castes, and 28 to OBCs, with Muslims and SCs receiving 18 and 14 tickets each [86]) also facilitated gains amongst OBCs and upper castes.[87] The BSP's share of the Brahmin vote, in particular, rose as well,[88] though the decisive shift of Brahmin support was to occur only in 2007.

The 2007 state assembly election falls outside the purview of this study, and I discuss it only briefly here. Following the drift of Thakurs towards the SP, the BSP took advantage of Brahmin-Thakur animosity to target Brahmins in the run-up to the elections. The BSP awarded 86 of its 138 upper caste nominations to Brahmins, with Thakurs and Baniyas receiving 38 and 14 nominations respectively. The BSP also targeted OBCs, awarding this category 110 tickets, with Muslims and SCs being awarded 61 and 92 tickets each.[89] The BSP won the largest vote share of all parties, ie. 30.46 percent, and an absolute majority, ie. 206 out of a total of 402 seats, on account of a striking shift in upper caste, and upper backward, support. Its support levels amongst lower backwards and non-Chamar SCs, however, remained unchanged, indicating that the construction of the *bahujan samaj* remained, as yet, an unfinished task. But that the BSP remained committed to the *bahujan* project was clear from the following slogan, crafted specifically for the 2007 election : *jiski jitni taiyari, uski utni bhagidari* (the greater your readiness to accept our ideology, the greater the representation we will offer you).[90] This message, crafted for non-subalterns, signalled that the BSP would accommodate them only on its own terms ; it would not, in other words, allow non-*bahujan* representation to jeopardize its subaltern

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[85] 71 percent of SCs in Uttar Pradesh voted for the BSP in 2004. NES, CSDS, New Delhi, 2004, cited in Singh and Verma, "BJP the real loser."

[86] BSP State Unit, Lucknow.

[87] The BSP received 15 percent of the OBC vote, and 4 percent of the upper caste vote, as compared to 11 percent and 2 percent, respectively, in 1999. A.K. Verma, "Reverse Social Osmosis in Uttar Pradesh," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 42, No. 10 (March 2007) : 819, Table 3 ; Sanjay Kumar, "The Prospects," *Seminar* 571 (March 2007) : 68, Table 4. Both Verma and Kumar draw on data from the NES, 2004.

[88] Brahmin support rose from 3 percent in 1999 to 5 percent in 2004. A.K. Verma, "BSP's Strategy in Uttar Pradesh : Wooing the Brahmins for a New Alliance," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 40 No. 26 (June 2005) : 2647. Verma uses data from the NES, 2004, here as well.

[89] BSP State Unit, Lucknow.

[90] Vivek Kumar, "Bahujan Samaj Party : Some Issues of Democracy and Governance," in Sudha Pai, ed., *Political Process in Uttar Pradesh* (New Delhi : Pearson Longman, 2007), 266 (translation mine).

agenda, and would, furthermore, require non-*bahujans* to tolerate that agenda even when it hurt them to do so.

4. The BSP's Policy Efforts

4.1. EFFORTS IN THE SYMBOLIC REALM

The BSP has sought to deliver symbolic empowerment via three avenues : (1) the commemoration of *bahujan* leaders through a politics of naming, and the building of memorials and statues, the expectation being that this would inculcate historical awareness amongst *bahujans*, and pride in a common "glorious" past ; (2) effecting a change in the caste character of the state, through the nomination of lower caste candidates, particularly in its earlier phase, and administrative reshuffles placing lower caste bureaucrats in positions of prestige and power ; and (3) policy measures, the most significant being the strict implementation of the SC/ST Act.

The Politics of Names, Memorials and Statues

Coming to the politics of names, the BSP has named districts, as well as schools and colleges, after lower caste leaders. This is one more area in which the BSP has clashed with the BJP, with the latter often protesting the change in nomenclature. Thus, when Mayawati named a new district "Shahuji Maharaj Nagar," (Shahuji Maharaj had ruled Kolhapur, in what is now the state of Maharashtra, in the late nineteenth and early twentienth centuries, and had undertaken caste reform, providing free education to lower castes, and advocating intercaste marriage), this irked sections of the BJP state unit, who wanted the new district to be named after Tulsidas, an upper caste poet who was born in Banda, out of which the new district was carved.[91]

It was, however, the BSP's politics of statues that drew the most ire, both in towns and in the countryside. In the towns, the statues came in for flak on account of the immense expenditure that they entailed (the Ambedkar Memorial in Lucknow, for instance, was built at a cost of more than one billion rupees), and the political upmanship the BSP displayed, especially vis-à-vis upper caste parties, in deciding

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[91] Subhash Mishra, "Divide and Rule," *India Today*, May 11, 1997, 75.

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where and how to instal them. Thus, while installing a new statue of Ambedkar in Hazratganj, the heart of Lucknow, the BSP ensured that it dwarfed the statue of Gandhi standing across the road.[92] Ambedkar statues were also erected on a vast scale across the Uttar Pradesh countryside. More modest than the ones put up in cities (the statues in the villages tend to be human-sized, and made of cement, rather than bronze or marble), these statues were almost invariably to be found in SC-majority villages, particularly in the West. The location of these statues, furthermore, was an issue in the villages just as it was in the towns ; landed castes often complained that these were strategically positioned so as to make the transportation of crops difficult, or, alternatively, to signal the BSP's intention to claim a particular plot of land for distribution to subalterns.[93]

Efforts to Change the Character of the State

The nomination of lower caste candidates played an important part in the BSP's effort to change the character of the state. While Chamars were awarded fewer tickets in the BSP's multiethnic phase, non-Chamar subalterns continued to be nominated following the BSP's accommodation of non-*bahujans*. The other part of the effort to forge a subaltern-friendly state involved the actual use, and threat, of transfers, to discipline the bureaucracy. Mayawati transferred 62 IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officers and 105 IPS (Indian Police Service) officers during her first term as Chief Minister,[94] with her second term seeing transfers occur on a still higher scale.[95] Needless to say, these transfers tended to favour lower caste bureaucrats, who either received promotions or were transferred to departments whose efficient functioning was considered crucial to the success of the BSP's

[92] Subhash Mishra and Ashok Malik, "Statue Symbols," *India Today*, July 28, 1997, 38-39.
[93] Interviews with Jat and Thakur respondents in Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh respectively.
[94] Venkitesh Ramakrishnan, "Cracks to the Fore," Frontline, July 28, 1995, 25.
[95] Thus, Zoya Hasan writes, "1350 civil and police officials were transferred during her [ie. Mayawati's] six month tenure … As many as 467 members of the Indian Administrative Service, 380 officers of the Indian Police Service, 300 members of the Provincial Police Service and 250 Provincial Police were transferred … At the end of Mayawati's term in office, a quarter of the district magistrates and superintendents of police and more than a quarter of the principal secretaries…belonged to the Scheduled Castes." Hasan, "Representation and Redistribution : The New Lower Caste Politics of North India," in Francine R. Frankel et.al., eds.,*Transforming India : Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 2000), 160.

programmes. For transfers not only comprised a source of symbolic empowerment for SCs, but were also the instrument whereby the BSP sought to neutralize the resistance its agenda faced from the upper caste bureaucracy. The *fear* of transfers also worked to make bureaucrats toe the line ; combined with Mayawati's personal monitoring of certain departments, and unannounced visits to the districts, this fear served to temper insubordination, at least within the top tiers of the state- and district-level administration.[96]

The pressure on the bureaucracy also produced another significant result, in that it induced both the police and the administration to treat lower castes respectfully. As a Gadariya (lower backward) respondent put it : "When we people, wearing torn and dirty clothes, would enter the police station during *Behenji's* [ie. Mayawati's] [97] time, the police officer on duty would ask us to take a seat. Take a seat ! Can you imagine? This is unthinkable when Mulayam [leader of the SP] or the BJP is in power.[98]

Policy Measures

Finally, the issue of psychological empowerment was also addressed by the BSP through policy measures, the most important of which was the implementation of the SC/ST Act. This Act was enacted by Parliament in 1989, and made the harassment, intimidation and humiliation of SCs an offence punishable by law. In Uttar Pradesh, however, the Act existed only on paper, till the BSP government decided to enforce its provisions. Mayawati adopted a firm stance on the issue of prosecution, insisting that parties found guilty should be jailed ; it was this position, more than anything else, that made the Act so effective under BSP rule. For the prospect of going to jail, and of having to face SCs resident in the village upon one's return, was simply too humiliating for upper castes, and in particular, Thakurs, the community most likely to commit the sort of offences punishable under the Act. It

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[96] Interview with BAMCEF official, July 23, 2004, Azamgarh.
[97] *Behenji,* which means "elder sister," is a term of respectful address/allusion, most often used to refer to a middle-aged woman. Mayawati is almost universally referred to as *Behenji* in BSP and BAMCEF circles.
[98] Interview, December 27, 2003, Mawana, Meerut.

was, thus, primarily, to avoid this humiliation that they were careful to treat SCs respectfully, or at least not disrespectfully, while the BSP was in power.[99]

It was clear from my interviews with upper castes that they saw the Act's implementation as signalling the end of an era ; many of them complained that it had helped breed a new "impudence" and "disobedience" amongst SCs, that had been quite unthinkable before. As one Thakur landowner in Jaunpur put it :

Earlier, these low caste men would stand up when they saw us [ie. Thakurs] coming from a mile away. Now, forget standing up, they invite us to sit on their *charpai* [stringbeds] and drink tea ! The cheek of it ! Times have changed, these days are not good for us. We have to swallow these insults. Earlier, we would have knocked their teeth out, or worse, for this behaviour.[100]

It needs to be noted here that the SC/ST Act's implementation, as well as the BSP's transfer and pressure tactics vis-à-vis the administration, have brought more than just symbolic benefits ; they have had material repercussions as well. The economic dependence of SC agricultural labour on upper caste and OBC farmers has made them vulnerable to both psychological and physical abuse, and material exploitation. The enforcement of the Act has thus benefitted this group in two ways : it has reduced the likelihood of insults and bodily harm, while also enhancing their material bargaining power vis-à-vis employers. SC farm labour have taken advantage of the Act to organize strike action over wages, resist forced labour, and demand timely payment.[101] Similarly, facing pressure from the BSP to treat subalterns well, the administration has speedily resolved problems brought by lower castes, including some of a material nature. The *tehsil diwas* (*tehsil* day), the *tehsil*-level weekly forum attended by officials and villagers alike during BSP rule, has thus facilitated the solution of land-disputes involving *bahujans* much earlier than would have otherwise been the case.[102]

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[99] Interviews with Thakur respondents in Jaunpur district.
[100] Interview, 17 May, 2004, Jaunpur District. The sentiments expressed here closely resembles those of the Thakur landlords in Lerche's fieldwork village, which was also in Jaunpur. See Lerche, "Politics of the Poor," 213.
[101] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Jaunpur district.
[102] Interviews with SC and lower backward respondents in all four fieldwork districts.

Quotas

We now discuss the material benefits that the BSP has secured for *bahujans*. The most important of these have been quotas. While the Constitution has guaranteed SCs reservations since its very inception, the implementation of reservations has left a lot to be desired. Arguing that it is on account of the upper caste bias of Uttar Pradesh governments that reserved vacancies have been left unfilled in the state for most of the post-independence period (the excuse offered has been a lack of "qualified candidates"), the BSP has made the flawless implementation of SC reservations an important plank of its policy agenda.[103]

The BSP has also drawn sections of lower backwards and Muslims who had hitherto been excluded from the province of quotas, within their ambit. Mayawati has included 15 lower backward castes that had been left out of the initial list of OBCs within that list,[104] and granted reservations in the state bureaucracy to lower caste Muslims. Awarding Muslims 8.44 percent of the 27 percent reservations due to OBCs, she has also reserved 8 percent of police officer posts in Uttar Pradesh for the community.[105] Quotas, it may be noted, have served the same purpose as administrative transfers at times, being used by the BSP to break down resistance to its social justice agenda. Thus, the order reserving 20 percent of district-level posts of "Police Station In Charge" (*thanedar*) for SCs in 1995 sought, not only to secure jobs for SCs, but also to break the upper caste-police nexus at the level of the local state.[106]

The BSP's aggressive quota politics has helped a larger number of SCs attain middle class status than ever before. But this politics has had its shortcomings ; quotas have facilitated access mostly to low level government jobs, in both the BSP's time and before. Thus, "in the early 1980s, only 5.8 percent of Class I officials, and 6.23 percent of Class II officials" were SCs,[107] despite 21 percent of positions being

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[103] Interview with BAMCEF official, November 21, 2003,Lucknow.
[104] Sudha Pai, "Dalit Question and Political Response : Comparative Study of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh," Vol. 39, No. 11, *Economic and Political Weekly* (March 2004) : 1145.
[105] Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 416.
[106] Kumar, "The Power of Strategy,"15.
[107] Hasan, "Representation and Redistribution," 156.

reserved for them. And while "the percentage of white-collar workers among the SC/ST increased from 9.3 percent to 12.3 percent" over the time period 1983 to 1999-2000, "most of this change was concentrated at the lower end of the white-collar job spectrum...with the share of SC workers in administrative and executive jobs remaining virtually unchanged over this period (0.3 percent in 1983 and 0.4 percent in 1999-2000 ...)." [108]

Not only has success been limited to low grade jobs, but those who have emerged successful have furthermore come from middle class families. This has created an occupational imbalance between Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh ; with the vast majority of SCs in the East being engaged as agricultural labour, with little access to education, quotas have tended to benefit SCs in the West disproportionately. The labouring sections of SCs have also been better-off and more aware in the West ; as such, it is more often in the West than in the East that SC youth from working class backgrounds have succeeding in "cracking" quotas, and been the first to "make it" in their families. Quotas have thus secured greater upward mobility for SC labour in the West, relative to the East.[109]

The Ambedkar Village Programme (AVP)

Nothing has better demonstrated the changed relationship between SCs and the state under BSP rule than the AVP. Initiated by the Mulayam Singh government in 1990, the AVP originally targeted villages with a SC population of 50 percent or more, providing them extra funds for the implementation of existing programmes for the weaker sections of the populace. The period 1990-1995 saw five villages selected per district annually ; when the BSP came to power in 1995, however, it widened the scope of the programme. Mayawati revised the selection criterion yet again in 1997, so as to draw villages that had between 20-49 percent SCs within its ambit. The BSP also diverted funds from programmes catering to the general population, and concentrated resources in the Ambedkar villages ; within these

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[108] Ravi Srivastava, "Economic Change among Social Groups in Uttar Pradesh, 1983-2000," in *Political Process in Uttar Pradesh*, 354-55.
[109] I use empirical data gathered from my fieldwork villages to make this argument, elaborated in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

villages, furthermore, it was SC hamlets and households, in particular, that received benefits. As Sudha Pai argues, the aim was "to concentrate developmental funds spread thinly over the state" in villages where SCs were present, thereby compensating for the failure of upper caste parties to provide for the material well-being of this community so far.[110] Reverse discrimination, in other words, constituted the crux of the philosophy underlying the AVP.

The AVP package consisted of the following eleven programmes :
(1) construction of a link road connecting the SC hamlet to the main road ;
(2) electrification ; (3) school construction ; (4) provision of clean drinking water through the installation of handpumps ; (5) construction of toilets ; (6) construction of drains ; (7) provision of irrigation facilities through free boring ; (8) the Intensive Rural Development Programme (IRDP), which provided loans for dairying, poultry-farming, bee-keeping, mushroom cultivation, setting up shops and other small businesses ; (9) the Indira Awas Yojana (Indira Housing Scheme – IAY), which provided subsidized housing ; (10) widow pensions ; and (11) old age pensions.[111]

While these programmes provided amenities, improved sanitation, and built infrastructure, they did not do much to help SCs climb out of poverty. The only exception was the IRDP ; the loans provided by this programme had allowed some SCs in my fieldwork villages to set themselves up as tailors, carpenters, mechanics and electricians, and to start up small businesses (tea-stalls, snack-bars, and stationery stores). But the IRDP helped only a very small swathe of SCs, and was by itself insufficient to propel the SC poor out of labouring occupations in any significant way. There were, moreover, cases where even the amenities delivered by the AVP failed to reach SC beneficiaries. This was especially true of the East, was SC agricultural labour remained dependent on upper caste and OBC farmers. In villages where landed castes held de-facto power, AVP benefits were channelled away from SCs towards landed communities themselves, despite the numerical preponderance of SCs, both within the village and the *panchayat*.[112]

Its material ineffectiveness, however, did not prevent the AVP from being viciously opposed by upper castes. This was for two main reasons. The first

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[110] Pai, "Dalit Question and Political Response," 1145.
[111] Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution*, 126-131, 148.
[112] This claim rests on evidence gathered through the ethnographic study of fieldwork villages.

pertained to the psychological empowerment the AVP secured in those villages where benefits reached the target SC population. With the construction of toilets, handpumps, and schools in SC quarters, SCs no longer fetched water from upper caste hamlets, or walked through upper caste neighbourhoods on their way to school ; nor did they defecate on upper caste fields, thus reducing opportunities for harassment and humiliation.[113] The second reason had to do with the construction of link roads. Link roads, of course, had a symbolic dimension (they were built to allow SCs to bypass upper caste quarters), but apart from that, they also touched upon the issue of land. For their construction often required upper castes to move off land they had occupied, and were cultivating, illegally, with upper caste intransigence on this issue leading to a face-off between landed communities and the BSP. Mayawati's personal monitoring of the AVP only added to the problem ; this made upper castes dig in their heels that much harder, while at the same time exerting pressure on the bureaucracy to resolve the issue, and move ahead with construction.[114]

Land Distribution

Before discussing the BSP's land-related programmes, I sketch a brief history of land distribution efforts in Uttar Pradesh.

The Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition and Land Reform Act of 1950 had eliminated the class of tax-collecting intermediaries and big absentee landlords, thereby allowing former tenants and sharecroppers to acquire land, and establish direct contact with the state. Zamindari Abolition had thus "strengthened the hold on the land of larger numbers of cultivators who were somewhat less secure – in legal right, social position, and economic strength - before the reforms were effected." [115] However, while allowing for the shifting of agrarian power down the ladder of caste and class, Zamindari Abolition benefitted only the middle peasantry, with landless agricultural labour gaining little from the reform.[116] For Zamindari

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[113] Interviews with SC respondents in all four fieldwork districts.
[114] Interviews with landed castes, BSP cadres, and officials in charge of the AVP, in Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts.
[115]H.C. L. Merillat, *Land and the Constitution in India* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1970), 79, cited in Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 42.
[116] Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 42.

Abolition rejected the idea of land ceilings, providing little scope for the distribution of ceiling surplus land to the landless. It was only in the 1960s that the task of imposing ceilings was taken up by the Uttar Pradesh government, with the enactment of the Uttar Pradesh Imposition of Ceiling on Land Holding Act, in 1960. But the exemptions, fake "transfers, tardy implementation and legislative loopholes, made the [Ceiling] Act infructous," and even its amendment in 1972 could not prevent large landholders from adopting various mechanisms (division of land among relatives, and the establishment of bogus cooperatives or educational and charitable trusts) to evade confiscation.[117] Given the heavy presence of large landholding interests within the Congress, and of peasant proprietor interests within the BKD, there was, indeed, very little incentive for governments in Uttar Pradesh to enforce land ceilings during the first four decades following independence.

Following Zamindari Abolition, village wastelands, pastures, meadows and arable non-holding land was vested in the state and transferred to the *gram sabhas*, or village assemblies (later established as the lowest tier of self-governing institutions by the 73rd Amendment). Guidelines were further set up that allowed for the awarding of direct ownership rights vis-à-vis *gaon sabha* land, as this land was called, with landless SCs and STs to be accorded the highest priority in the matter of allotment. Compared to the distribution of ceiling surplus land, the distribution of *gaon sabha* land has been fairly extensive ; in 1990-1991, for instance, allotments amounted to 5.09 percent of the area in operated holdings (the corresponding figure for ceiling surplus land being much lower, at 0.82 percent). Subaltern groups have, furthermore, benefitted significantly from the allotment of *gaon sabha* plots, with 58.4 percent of the total number of beneficiaries being SCs and STs, for land allotted until March 1992.[118]

But *gaon sabha* allotments have not ensured actual possession, with SCs finding it the most difficult to occupy plots. A field survey of five districts, conducted in Uttar Pradesh in 2002, shows the percentage of non-possession of *gaon*

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[117] G.K. Lieten and Ravi Srivastava, *Unequal Partners : Power Relations, Devolution and Development in Uttar Pradesh* (New Delhi : Sage, 1999), 42.
[118] Ibid., 43.

sabha land to be 5.7 percent of allotted plots on the average.[119] These figures, moreover, reflect cases where non-possession has arisen on account of the forced occupation of plots by "big farmers" and "influential persons." Since SCs rarely figure in these categories, it is hardly surprising that they should be victims, rather than perpetrators, of illegal occupation. The survey does, indeed, show SCs to be the only caste group who are not guilty of "over-possession" (ie. forcible occupation) of *gaon sabha* land in the villages concerned.[120]

The incomplete consolidation of private holdings has aided the illegal occupation of *gaon sabha* plots. Incomplete consolidation has meant that *gaon sabha* land has remained "scattered and fragmented, as patches in the control of big landholders," or at the very least, as islands surrounded by fields belonging to upper castes. With the way to *gaon sabha* plots often lying through upper caste territory, it has been easy for upper castes to intimidate allottees, thereby making it difficult for members of subaltern groups to take possession of plots allotted to them.[121] Since the consolidation of holdings has progressed far more in the West than in the East, possession of *gaon sabha* plots has been less of a problem in the West.[122]

Litigation has been yet another factor that has worked to prevent allottees from taking possession of plots. *Gaon sabha* allotments have frequently been contested by upper castes occupying the plot in question ; these cases, moreover, have remained pending for several years, with the land declared sub judice till the time of resolution.

Furthermore, as G.P. Mishra and D.M. Diwakar show, the aborting of allotments has been aided by the active connivance of corrupt state agents in Uttar Pradesh. Lower caste allottees have frequently had to pay bribes to those responsible for enforcing fresh allotments, namely, the *pradhan* and the *patwari* ; upon their failure to serve up the money, the land has been diverted to those less needy, but capable of

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[119] G. P. Mishra and D.M. Diwakar, *Land Reforms and Human Development* (New Delhi : Manak, 2005), 100-101, Table 4.7.
[120] Ibid., 102 , 104-05, Tables 4.8 and 4.9.
[121] Ibid., 96-99. My fieldwork further substantiates these findings.
[122] Interview with the Commissioner, Consolidation, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, August 7, 2004 ; Interviews with Premnath Rai, Member, State Secretariat, CPI(M), Uttar Pradesh, November 23, 2003, Lucknow ; and Imtiaz Beg, CPI cadre, June 23, 2004, Azamgarh.

making the required payments.[123] *Patwaris* have, additionally, played a key role in facilitating illegal occupation, readily falsifying land records upon being paid bribes by upper castes.[124]

It is in the context of this dismal record, I argue, that the BSP's efforts need to be evaluated. The BSP's endeavours vis-à-vis land have had three main thrusts so far : (1) enforcing possession of plots previously allotted to SCs ; (2) regularizing previously unauthorized possession of *gaon sabha* land by SCs ; and (3) distributing new *gaon sabha* plots to the SC community. Of these, the BSP has made the enforcement of possession its top priority, identifying poor implementation arising out of weak political will as an important shortcoming affecting the politics of land.[125] Accordingly, special drives launched by the BSP governments of 1995 and 1997 have granted 1,58,000 SCs possession of land allotted to them by previous governments, that they had hitherto been unable to claim.

The BSP has also regularized unauthorized possession of *gaon sabha* land, in all those cases where SCs have taken possession before June 3, 1995, with 20,000 SCs gaining possession of 15,000 acres as a result. It has also withdrawn all cases of illegal occupation against SCs, and granted SC tenants of more than 10 years standing direct ownership rights. 158,000 SC tenants have consequently gained ownership status vis-à-vis 120,000 acres of land during April-September 1997. Finally, the BSP has distributed new *gaon sabha* plots ; 81,500 SCs have been allotted 52,379 acres by BSP governments in course of the 1990s.[126]

The BSP has, admittedly, limited its efforts to *gaon sabha* land, and avoided disturbing the status quo vis-à-vis ceilings. Thus, Sudha Pai argues that the "[i]mplementation of [l]and [c]eiling laws ... and [the] consolidation of landholdings, [still] remain a matter of serious concern" despite a SC party having been in power in the state.[127] But, as a BAMCEF official pointed out, any effort in the realm of ceilings is likely to start off a class war in the countryside, with SCs being murdered in large

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[123] Mishra and Diwakar, *Land Reforms and Human Development*, 107-08.
[124] Interviews with SC and lower backward respondents in Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts.
[125] Interview with BAMCEF official, July 23, 2004, Azamgarh.
[126] Pai, "Dalit Question and Political Response," 1145, and Sudha Pai, "Deprivation and Development in UP : The Economic Agenda of the BSP," *Man and Development* (March 2003) : 44.
[127] Pai, "Dalit Question and Political Response," 1145.

numbers.[128] Furthermore, even though *gaon sabha* allotments amount to "small size[d], poor quality plots with no provision of credit or concomitant surplus," "the additional toehold provided by these plots ..[is] valued highly by the allottees." [129] Thus, Ravi Srivastava, citing a study of land distribution in eight villages in Uttar Pradesh, argues that income from *gaon sabha* plots, despite being marginal, served as a source of extra economic security, and even social status, for subalterns in these villages.[130] This is especially likely to be true if the beneficiaries are landless labourers ; *gaon sabha* allotments, whatever their other shortcomings, have certainly helped mitigate absolute landlessness amongst SC agricultural labour in the state.[131]

And finally, any assessment of the BSP's efforts needs to take into account of the overwhelming resistance that these efforts have faced from the upper caste and OBC landed, both within and outside the state apparatus. The lower bureaucracy has taken to falsifying records, and inflating figures pertaining to both allotment and enforcement, when faced with so-called "impossible" targets handed down by senior bureaucrats, themselves under tremendous pressure from the BSP Chief Minister.[132] The nexus between *patwaris* and landowners at the grassroots has also made it difficult for the higher administration to deliver results.[133] Resistance from outside the administration has been no less overwhelming ; when SC allottees, aided by BSP cadres, have sought to assert their rights, they have been intimidated and frequently murdered by upper caste farmers, especially in the East.[134]

In the final analysis, no other governing party has sought to close the gap between legislation and reality marking the problem of *gaon sabha* land in the manner of the BSP. If the party's intervention in the politics of land has had any novel feature, it has consisted precisely in its being the first to summon up the political will to attempt this task, formidable opposition notwithstanding.

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[128] Interview, July 23, 2004, Azamgarh.

[129] Lieten and Srivastava, *Unequal Partners*, 43.

[130] Sudhir Bobade and Sanjay Bhatia, "Land Ceiling Situation in Uttar Pradesh" (Mimeo, National Seminar Proceedings, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, 1994), cited in ibid., 43-44.

[131] Interview, District Land Records Clerk, Meerut district, January 13, 2004.

[132] I discuss this issue in greater detail in Chapter 4.

[133] Interview, District Land Records Clerk, Meerut district, January 13, 2004.

[134] Interviews with Chamar respondents and BSP cadres in Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts.

The BSP's material achievements have hardly kept up with its symbolic ones. The psychological impact of BSP rule has been powerful and decisive ; the caste profile of legislative and administrative personnel has undergone a dramatic change under BSP governments, with the state having become noticeably more respectful towards subalterns. The party has, furthermore, changed the character of public space in Uttar Pradesh ; statues of low caste leaders, and memorials commemorating them, have dotted the landscape since Mayawati first assumed power, thus correcting the upper caste prejudices that have so far marked the state's iconography.

In comparison, the BSP's material achievements have been far less majestic. Quotas have benefitted mostly middle class SCs ; the AVP again, has done little to stimulate any upward mobility among the low caste poor. And the BSP's efforts in the realm of land have been limited in scope ; the party has shied away from tackling the issue of ceilings, for fear of provoking violence against SC labour.

But material issues have nevertheless served to drive the SC poor's, and specifically, the Chamar poor's, support for the party. This emerged clearly in my interviews with low caste respondents ; these interviews showed a clear awareness of the circumstances that had tied the BSP down, and impeded progress, and an appreciation of the courage, and grit, that Mayawati had displayed in nevertheless staying the course. The most significant impediments cited were : (1) the limits imposed by coalition partners, in other words, the BJP ; and (2) the resistance put up by upper caste bureaucrats, and landed castes, who had often acted in tandem with one another. These forces had not only prevented the BSP from adopting bolder programmes, and subverted its efforts while the party was in power, but had also reversed the gains the party had delivered to the subaltern poor, once non-BSP formations captured the state.

The reversals recalled most frequently were Kalyan Singh's dilution of the SC/ST Act, Mulayam Singh's reversal of quotas announced by Mayawati, and the SP's and BJP's abetting the subversion of *gaon sabha* allocations, evident from their governments' looking the other way as upper castes reclaimed the land handed over to subalterns by the BSP. The most extreme case of resistance, on the other hand,

comprised the cold-blooded murder of BSP cadres, undertaken as retribution for their efforts to aid the BSP's efforts in the realm of land.

These reversals and resistance, rather than marring the BSP's performance in the eyes of the subaltern, have been understood as factors that have hindered it from doing better. The BSP's commitment to a material agenda has never been in question ; rather, the losses suffered by party cadres, and the leadership's determination in their face, have only served to underline that commitment further. Their faith in this commitment has led Chamar labour to support the BSP ; they have expected that the party would deliver on its agenda in future, when it commanded a majority of its own.

4

The Politics of Mobility and Subaltern Disunity :
The Bahujan Samaj Party in Western Uttar Pradesh

This chapter, drawing on fieldwork data from Western Uttar Pradesh, lays out, in part, the empirical findings that ground the theoretical arguments made in Chapter 2.[1] It is organized into four sections. The first section lays out the rationale guiding the choice of fieldsites in the West. The second section, drawing on interviews with Chamar voters, explains why the Chamar poor in Western Uttar Pradesh vote for the BSP. The third section draws on interviews with voters from all castes resident in the fieldwork villages, and with BSP cadres. It uses this data to argue that the BSP treats its various caste constituencies differently, and represents them asymmetrically. This section also attempts to explain why some constituencies privileged by the BSP have so far refrained from delivering it a committed vote. The fourth section, using the same sources, throws light on the factors obstructing *bahujan* unity. It argues that the BSP remains "captured" by its Chamar base in Western Uttar Pradesh, and that its ties to Chamars here have prevented the party from widening its subaltern base.

1. Justifying the Choice of Fieldsites

Fieldwork Districts

Meerut and Muzaffarnagar, my fieldwork districts in Western Uttar Pradesh, typify the economic and social characteristics of the region. Both districts, being relatively urbanized and industrialized, have allowed SCs, and particularly Chamars, to disengage from the agrarian sector. The move away from agrarian employment has loosened the ties binding Chamar labour to the land ; the transition to towns has

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[1] Fieldwork was conducted in Western Uttar Pradesh over the period December 2003 to April 2004 (December 2003-February 2004 in Meerut, and February-April 2004 in Muzaffarnagar).

also created awareness of the value of education, with school and college enrolment amongst poorer Chamars shooting up. This, in turn, has affected the economic outlook and material priorities of the Chamar poor, with their expectations of the BSP being markedly different than in the East, where Chamar labour have not disengaged from land to the same extent.

Meerut and Muzaffarnagar have also allowed us to study the interactions between powerful backward castes (Jats and Gujjars) on the one hand, and SCs on the other, as opposed to the upper caste-SC dynamics that have marked politics in the East. Their demographic profile has also allowed for a focus on the obstacles hindering *bahujan* unity ; the three subaltern categories, ie. Chamars, non-Chamar SCs, and non-SC *bahujans,* ie. lower backwards, have all been present in these districts. The·difference in the caste make-up of the East and West has also facilitated the exploration of an interesting question : following the BSP's multiethnic transformation, on what terms have OBCs and upper castes been accommodated within the party? Have the terms varied for the two groups? If so, how and why?

Table 4.1 : Caste Profile of Meerut and Muzaffarnagar Districts (castes listed in descending order of numerical strength)

Meerut District	Muzaffarnagar District
1. Muslims	1. Muslims
2. Chamars (SC)	2. Jats (Upper Backward)
3. Baniyas (Upper Caste)	3. Chamars (SC)
4. Gujjars (Upper Backward)	4. Gujjars (Upper Backward)
5. Jats (Upper Backward)	5. Sainis (Lower Backward)
6. Brahmins (Upper Caste)	6. Baniyas (Upper Caste)
7. Balmikis (SC)	7. Brahmins (Upper Caste)
8. Tyagis (Upper Backward)	8. Tyagis (Upper Backward)
9. Sainis (Lower Backward)	9. Gadariyas (Lower Backward)
10. Prajapatis (Lower Backward)	10. Balmikis (SC)
11. Gadariyas (Lower Backward)	11. Prajapatis (Lower Backward)
12. Thakurs (Upper Caste)	12. Kashyaps (Lower Backward)
13. Nais (Lower Backward)	13. Thakurs (Upper Caste)
14. Kashyaps (Lower Backward)	14. Khatiks (SC)
15. Khatiks (SC)	
16. Yadavs (Upper Backward)	
17. Lodhis (Upper Backward)	

Source : BSP, Meerut and Muzaffarnagar District Units.
Notes : (1) While Muslims constitute the largest community in both districts, my fieldwork villages. had more Jats and Gujjars than Muslims. Muslims in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar belong to lower backward communities, and do not own a lot of land. As such, SC agricultural labour find themselves pitted against Jats and Gujjars, both farming communities, rather than Muslims, in these parts. It was for the same reason that the presence of Baniyas was not an important criterion driving village selection. While Baniyas have a large presence in Meerut, they are a trader caste whose lives do not intersect with that of the SC poor in any significant way. (2) While there are caste divisions within Muslims, data pertaining to these divisions was not available at the district-level.

We now discuss the choice of Hastinapur and Morna, the two state assembly constituencies selected for fieldwork in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts respectively. Of Hastinapur and Morna, Hastinapur alone is reserved for SCs, a contrast that allows us to compare the costs that the BSP's non-SC nominations have imposed on Chamars, with those imposed by SC nominations, if any. Of the seven state assembly constituencies in Meerut district (Siwalkhas, Kharkauda, Meerut, Meerut Cantonment, Kithore, Hastinapur and Sardhana[2]), and the nine in Muzaffarnagar (Morna, Jansath, Khatauli, Muzaffarnagar, Kandhla, Charthawal, Baghra, Kairana, and Thana Bhawan[3]), only four are reserved : Hastinapur and Siwalkhas in Meerut, and Jansath and Charthawal in Muzaffarnagar. The BSP had yet to win an election in Hastinapur, Siwalkhas and Jansath when I conducted fieldwork in 2003-2004.[4] And while the party had won the Charthawal seat in the 2002 state assembly elections, the subsequent defection of its Chamar MLA, Uma Kiran, to the SP, made Charthawal an atypical reserved constituency, unsuitable for studying the interactions between Chamar legislators and the Chamar constituency.[5] Between Hastinapur, Siwalkhas and Jansath, Hastinapur offered an advantage on account of the relatively large presence of Balmikis, a non-Chamar SC community.[6] This substantial Balmiki presence made possible a closer look at intra-SC dynamics in Western Uttar Pradesh, and their impact on the BSP's agenda of forging a committed *bahujan* vote here.[7]

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[2] Of these seven state assembly constituencies, all five, except Siwalkhas and Sardhana, belong to the Meerut-Mawana parliamentary constituency. While Siwalkhas is part of Baghpat parliamentary constituency, Sardhana is part of Muzaffarnagar parliamentary constituency.

[3] Of these nine state assembly constituencies, Morna, Jansath, Khatauli and Muzaffarnagar are part of Muzaffarnagar parliamentary constituency, while the other five are part of Kairana parliamentary constituency. Sardhana and Deoband state assembly constituencies, while being part of Muzaffarnagar parliamentary constituency, are not part of Muzaffarnagar district. Sardhana lies in Meerut district, while Deoband lies in Saharanpur district.

[4] The BSP did, however, go on to win all three reserved constituencies, as well as Charthawal, in the 2007 state assembly elections.

[5] While the BSP suffered defections throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the defectors were mostly upper caste and Muslim MLAs. Its Chamar MLAs rarely defected from the party.

[6] Balmikis are also known as Bhangis or Churhas.

[7] As per the count undertaken by the BSP prior to the 2002 state assembly elections, there were approximately 4000 Balmiki votes in Hastinapur, as compared to 3500 in Jansath, and 2800 in Siwalkhas. (Source : BSP District Units, Meerut and Muzaffarnagar.) While 4000 is not a very large number, it has worked to encourage the SP and BJP to nominate Balmiki candidates in Hastinapur.

Table 4.2 : Caste-wise Distribution of Votes in Hastinapur and Morna Assembly
Constituencies

Hastinapur Assembly Constituency		Morna Assembly Constituency	
Caste	Votes	Caste	Votes
1. Chamars (SC)	50,000	1. Muslims	71,000
2. Gujjars (Upper Backward)	45,000	2. Chamars (SC)	29,000
3. Muslims	40,000	3. Gujjars (Upper Backward)	20,000
4. Jats (Upper Backward)	15,000	4. Jats (Upper Backward)	18,000
5. Baniyas (Upper Caste)	15,000	5. Sainis (Lower Backward)	12,000
6. Prajapatis (Lower Backward)	8,000	6. Prajapatis (Lower Backward)	10,000
7. Gadariyas (Lower Backward)	7,000	7. Gadariyas (Lower Backward)	6,000
8. Sainis (Lower Backward)	6,000	8. Kashyaps (Lower Backward)	6,000
9. Balmikis (SC)	4,000	9. Thakurs (Upper Caste)	5,000
10. Kashyaps (Lower Backward)	4,000	10. Baniyas (Upper Caste)	5,000
11. Thakurs (Upper Caste)	4,000	11. Brahmins (Upper Caste)	2,000
12. Nais (Lower Backward)	4,000	12. Tyagis (Upper Backward)	2,000
13. Lodhis (Upper Backward)	3,000	13. Others	12,000
14. Tyagis (Upper Backward)	2,000	Total	1,98,000
15. Brahmins (Upper Caste)	2,500		
16. Yadavs (Upper Backward)	2,000		
17. Khatiks (SC)	2,000		
18. Others	15,500		
Total	2,29,000		

Source : BSP, Assembly Constituency Units, Hastinapur and Morna.
Note : The figures presented here are approximate ones. The total, in both cases, exceeds the
figure projected by the Election Commission for the 2002 state assembly elections (223,471 for
Hastinapur, and 184,951 for Morna), while falling below the figure projected for the 2007 state
assembly elections (246,650 for Hastinapur, and 204,908 for Morna). I obtained these figures in
2004, in the interval between the two elections.

The choice of Morna, on the other hand, was dictated by the following

considerations. Since Hastinapur did not allow for a study of a sitting BSP MLA, it

was important that my non-reserved constituency should be one that the BSP had

won. The BSP had picked up only two non-reserved seats in Meerut and

Muzaffarnagar districts in the 2002 elections : Kharkhauda in Meerut, and Morna in

Muzaffarnagar.[8] Having already chosen Hastinapur to represent Meerut, Morna

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The calculation has been that, in addition to the votes a non-BSP Balmiki candidate would get from
non-SCs (who would be voting on the basis of party affiliations, and hence against the BSP, in
reserved constituencies), he would draw coethnic votes from Balmikis as well. That those 4000 votes
have often served to provide the winning margin is evident from the victories secured by Atul Kumar
and Prabhu Dayal in Hastinapur in 1996 and 2002 respectively. Atul Kumar was a Khatik, an
independent supported by the BJP (Khatiks identify with Balmikis closely, on account of their shared
occupation of pig-rearing), while Prabhu Dayal was a Balmiki, and a SP candidate. The same principle
explains Suresh Titauria's win in Jansath, a reserved constituency with a significant Khatik presence, in
1991 and 1993 ; Titauria, a Khatik, ran on a BJP ticket. The question obviously arises as to what
prevents the BSP from nominating Balmiki/Khatik candidates in constituencies like Hastinapur and
Jansath. I address this question in section 4.

[8] The BSP retained Kharkhauda, but lost Morna, in the 2007 state assembly elections. It did, however,
win two non-reserved seats for the first time, ie. Sardhana in Meerut district, and Khatauli in
Muzaffarnagar district.

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presented itself as the obvious option. Morna, moreover, boasted the advantage of having a wide array of lower backwards from both Hindu and Muslim communities, with the BSP MLA himself belonging to the Saini, ie. a lower backward Hindu, caste. Morna thus allowed for an inquiry into lower backward-SC dynamics generally, as well as Muslim-SC interactions in particular, thus complementing my choice of Hastinapur as a site marked by intra-SC tensions. Taken together, the two sites facilitated a close look at the issues obstructing the formation of the *bahujan samaj* in the West.

Fieldwork Villages

So far as voter interviews went, the main village chosen in Hastinapur was Alipura, and in Morna, Dalki. The three subsidiary villages in Hastinapur, used to verify findings generated in the main village, were Bhoolni, Naiwala and Rampuri, their counterparts in Morna being Mansurpur, Ala Heri, and Patewa.[9] Interviews with BSP cadres were conducted over a wider range of settings : aside from the sites mentioned above, the villages of Gurha, Kheri Manihar, Kishanpur Birana, Saidipur Seth, Issapur, and Alipur Morna, and the towns of Mawana, Behsuma and Hastinapur, in Hastinapur assembly constituency ; and the villages of Bhopa, Morna, Firozepur Bangar, Chaurawala, Shukratal Bangar, Wazirabad, Chachrauli, Sikri, Gadwara, Yusufpur and Kakrauli, and the town of Bhoker Heri, in Morna assembly constituency. The BSP had divided each assembly constituency into 20 sectors for organizational purposes ; the sites mentioned above were drawn from 5 of these 20 sectors, for each constituency. Interviews were also conducted with BSP and BAMCEF officials active at the level of the constituency, and district. The SP, BJP and Congress did not have a significant grassroots presence ; the sample for these parties thus included cadres operative within constituency-level, and district-level, committees. Where party workers happened to be present in any of the villages mentioned above, however, they were interviewed as well.

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[9] The names of the main and subsidiary fieldwork villages have been changed to protect sources.

Table 4.3 : Caste-wise Distribution of Votes in Alipura and Dalki Villages

Alipura		Dalki	
Caste	Votes	Caste	Votes
1. Chamars (SC)	649	1. Gujjars (Lower Backward)	527
2. Jats (Upper Backward)	472	2. Thakurs (Upper Caste)	435
3. Brahmins (Upper Caste)	70	3. Gadariyas (Lower Backward)	420
4. Baniyas (Upper Caste)	50	4. Chamars (SC)	290
5. Balmikis (SC)	50	5. Sainis (Lower Backward)	130
6. Kashyaps (Lower Backward)	30	6. Kashyaps (Lower Backward)	90
7. Prajapatis (Lower Backward)	20	7. Balmikis (SC)	30
Total	1341	8. Muslims	50
		Total	1972

Source : Interviews with *pradhans*, Alipura and Dalki, December 12, 2003 and February 17, 2004, respectively.

Table 4.4 : Caste-wise Distribution of Muslim Votes in Dalki Village

Dalki	
Caste	Votes
1. Jhojhas (Lower Backward)	50
Total	50

Source : Interview with the *pradhan,* Dalki, February 17, 2004.

The following considerations guided my choice of the main fieldwork villages. First, they had to facilitate an understanding of the changing relations of domination and subordination between landed castes and SCs under BSP rule (ie. they had to have Jats and Gujjars present, as well as SCs), and allow us to study the obstacles hindering *bahujan* unity in the West (ie. they had to feature Chamars, non-Chamar SCs, as well as non-SC subalterns). While Alipura provided robust Jat, Chamar and non-Chamar SC (ie. Balmiki) samples, Dalki provided samples of Gujjars, Chamars, and a range of lower backward castes – both Hindu (Sainis, Gadariyas and Kasyhaps) and Muslim (Jhojhas).

Second, one of the two villages had to be an Ambedkar village. Most Ambedkar villages, by courtesy of their large SC populations, had SC reservations in *panchayats,* with Chamars dominating *panchayat* politics, owing to their numerical preponderance over other SCs. Having an Ambedkar village within the sample thus allowed us to study how the AVP (a BSP project that has favoured SCs), and its

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administration by Chamars, the BSP's core SC constituency, had affected *bahujan* unity. Of Alipura and Dalki, Alipura was an Ambedkar village, with a Chamar-dominant *panchayat*.

Third, practical considerations mattered as well – the villages had to lie within daily commuting distance of the town of Mawana, and the village of Morna, where I had set up base. Alipura was 30 kilometres away from Mawana, and could be reached by a bus leaving town every one hour. Dalki was 16 kilometres away from Morna, and could be reached by jeep.

2. The BSP and the Support of Chamar Labour

2.1. CHAMAR LABOUR'S SITUATION PRIOR TO THE BSP'S CAPTURING POWER

The economic situation of Chamar labour at the time the BSP first came to power has shaped the consequences of BSP rule for this constituency. The three key factors that have defined this situation are : (1) the Chamar poor's ownership of small and marginal holdings ; (2) their shift from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations ; and (3) the ascendancy of Chamars in village *panchayats*, achieved through the implementation of SC reservations introduced by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (henceforth 73rd Amendment) in 1993.

Table 4.5 : SC Agricultural Landholding in Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh

	Western Uttar Pradesh		Eastern Uttar Pradesh	
	% of SC Households	Average Size Of Holdings (In Hectares)	% of SC Households	Average Size Of Holdings (In Hectares)
Marginal Holdings (Below 1 Hectare)	82.87	0.37	92.17	0.28
Small Holdings (1-2 Hectares)	12.35	1.33	5.55	1.34
Semi- Medium Holdings (2-4 Hectares)	4.0	2.66	1.85	2.70
Medium Holdings (4-10 Hectares)	0.76	5.22	0.38	5.56
Large Holdings (Above 10 Hectares)	0.01	12.77	0.42	16.83
Total Holdings	100	0.62	100	0.41

Source : Agricultural Census, 1995-1996, Board of Revenue, Uttar Pradesh.

Table 4.5 presents data pertaining to the landholding situation of SCs in Uttar Pradesh in the mid-1990s. While the percentage of SC households cultivating large and medium holdings remained very low in both Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh, the distribution of SC households across the marginal, small and semi-medium categories was more even in the West. And in the marginal category, which had the highest concentration of SC households in both regions, the average size of holdings, again, was larger in the West.

The disparity in landholding between Jats and SCs was immense in Alipura, my fieldwork village in Hastinapur. Here, Jat holdings equalled 253.6 acres, whereas SC holdings totalled 9.5 acres. Again, all 87 Jat households owned land, as compared to 8 out of 131 SC households. But the SC landholding situation in Dalki was much better, and approximated the situation in Western Uttar Pradesh more closely. Here, SCs held a total of 46.15 acres, while Gujjars, Thakurs and Gadariyas, the other three landowning groups in the village, held 165.5, 80.5 and 155.7 acres respectively. The distribution of land amongst SCs themselves was also more equitable than in Alipura : of 70 SC households, 25 possessed land. Of these 25, 2 possessed holdings of 5-10 acres, 3 possessed holdings of 2.5-5 acres, and 20 possessed holdings of less than 2.5 acres, ie. marginal holdings. All of these 20 were labour households. All 25 landholding families were, moreover, Chamars ; Chamars, indeed, constituted the vast majority of SC landholders in all the villages visited for fieldwork purposes. In Alipura specifically, of 12 Balmiki households, none possessed land ; the same was true of the 3 Balmiki households in Dalki.[10]

The Chamar poor in the West have thus had access to land, and in particular, marginal holdings, especially when compared to their counterparts in the East. But it is not landownership, but rather, Chamar labour's transition to the non-agrarian sector, undertaken in the late 1980s and early 1990s, that has defined their material situation in the West. In Hastinapur and Morna, which fall within the sugarcane belt of Western Uttar Pradesh, a growing number of sugar mills, cane-crushing and sugar-packing plants, have absorbed Chamars formerly engaged in farm labour. The push towards non-agricultural occupations has also gained momentum from the growth of

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[10] Data pertaining to the caste-wise distribution of land in Alipura and Dalki was obtained from the *patwaris* of the respective villages.

towns, with a burgeoning urban population spurring the expansion of the transport and construction sectors, and providing opportunities for agricultural labourers to learn new skills, and take up work as drivers, mechanics, electricians and so on. In Alipura, and the neighbouring villages of Naiwala and Rampuri, specifically, it is the Mawana Sugar Mill, located in Mawana, and jobs generated by the construction industry in Meerut and Mawana, that have provided the bulk of non-agricultural employment. In Dalki, Mansurpur, Ala Heri and Patewa, on the other hand, Chamars have relied less on factories, instead finding employment in the transportation sector. [11]

This shift away from agrarian employment has proved crucial ; it has terminated the material dependence of Chamar agricultural labour on Jat and Gujjar farmers, thus drastically reducing opportunities for humiliation and exploitation. The relief, and sense of liberation, felt by Chamars came through quite clearly in course of interviews, in the comparisons they drew between their own situation, and those of migrant labourers now employed by Jats in their place. Referring to the latter as *Jatlogo ke naukar* (servants of Jats), respondents in Alipura described how Jats in their village not only refused these farm hands timely payment, but also murdered them on occasion, if they dared ask.[12] The move to the urban and industrial sector has, furthermore, secured a raise in incomes. While farm labourers typically earned 50-60 rupees a day, construction and brick kiln workers made 70 rupees, with the more skilled jobs in construction yielding 100-120 rupees daily. Those working in the transport sector (drivers of buses, trucks, and private taxis), again, earned 3000-6000 rupees a month, depending on the number of shifts/hours worked.[13]

The severance of ties between Chamar labour and landed castes has, even more crucially, allowed Chamars to reap the full benefits of SC reservations introduced by the 73rd Amendment in *panchayats*. Owing to the numerical preponderance of Chamars at the grassroots, *panchayat* reservations have benefitted them disproportionately, relative to other SCs. Reservations have also had material consequences for the community, in that Chamars have favoured coethnics over other SCs, as well as other subalterns, in the distribution of resources. Alipura has

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[11] Interviews with Chamar respondents in villages concerned.
[12] Interview, December 21, 2003, Alipura.
[13] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Alipura and Dalki.

thus witnessed a systematic channelling of programme benefits to Chamars since 1995, when the first *panchayat* elections implementing reservations were held in the state. Chamars have been most blatantly privileged in the distribution of housing subsidies under the IAY, a component of the AVP ; they have also benefitted disproportionately from the IRDP, also a AVP programme, with Balmikis receiving no loans under the scheme.[14]

But it is only when Chamars have sufficiently withdrawn from the agricultural sector that they have been able to exercise effective power within *panchayats*. To take the case of Bhoolni, where Jats succeeded in sabotaging SC reservations by electing a Balmiki stooge as *pradhan* in 2000, it was the persistence of economic ties between Jat farmers and sections of Chamar labour that prevented the latter from voting for the Chamar candidate instead. But where Chamars have opted out of agricultural labour in sufficient numbers, they have turned out to be a significant force in village politics, even where SC reservations have been absent. This has been the case in Dalki, as well as in Rampuri, Ala Heri, Mansurpur and Patewa.[15] In Dalki, Chamars have neither dominated *panchayats*, nor benefitted from *panchayat* politics. But they have nevertheless commanded significant clout by constituting a swing vote, capable of deciding whether a Thakur, Gujjar or Gadariya would emerge as *pradhan*. It is because they have severed all ties with the dominant landowning castes, ie. Thakurs and Gujjars,[16] that they have been able to cast their vote independently, unburdened by relations of subservience and obligation.

It needs to be noted, however, that Chamars alone amongst SCs have disengaged from agricultural labour. Balmikis in Alipura and Dalki have not only continued to work on the fields, but have also persisted with their traditional occupations – pig rearing, sweeping, and cleaning toilets. As a Balmiki woman in Alipura put it, "This is our work. This is what we have always done, this is what we

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[14] Interview with the Village Development Officer (VDO), January 3, 2004, Alipura. The Village Development Officer occupies the lowest position in the bureaucratic chain of command responsible for overseeing the implementation of rural development programmes, and the related expenditure of plan funds.

[15] Interviews with BSP cadres in Dalki and Rampuri.

[16] While Gadariyas, who are lower backwards, own land in Dalki, they do not constitute a dominant landowning community in Meerut or Muzaffarnagar districts, or in Western Uttar Pradesh.

will always do." [17] This is in marked contrast to Chamars, who have long since given up their traditional vocation of carrying and skinning dead animals, and working with leather. Their adherence to agricultural labour and "dirty" occupations has not only earned Balmikis the scorn of Chamars, but has also made them vulnerable to material exploitation by Jats. Their subservient economic position, and dependence on land, has also allowed Jats to employ them as pawns in their own power games against Chamars. In Alipura and Bhoolni, for instance, a Jat-Balmiki alliance exists that purports to shield Balmikis from Chamar domination ; what this alliance really seeks to do, however, is tilt the Jat-Chamar power balance in favour of Jats, and perpetuate Balmiki subservience vis-à-vis Jat farmers. [18]

Thus, to sum up, Chamar labour in Western Uttar Pradesh did not suffer from any crippling economic disempowerment at the time the BSP first came to power in the state. The marginal holdings owned by sections of the Chamar poor provided some economic security. Chamar labour had also accomplished the shift to the urban and industrial sector by this time, which helped sever their material dependence on landed castes, and brought them higher wages. And the implementation of the 73rd Amendment, by securing SC, and de facto, Chamar, reservations in *panchayats*, further changed the material balance of power in the countryside. The economic empowerment that accrued to Chamar labour from this combination of factors, I argue, shaped their interactions with the BSP in crucial ways. It moulded their expectations of the party, as well as the party's own politics in the West. [19] The greater upward mobility experienced by Chamars vis-à-vis other SCs, furthermore, had consequences for the BSP's efforts to forge a *bahujan* base in Western Uttar Pradesh.

2.2. THE BSP AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT OF CHAMAR LABOUR

Before discussing the BSP's material politics, I briefly discuss the psychological empowerment that BSP rule has secured for Chamars in the West. I have argued in Chapter 3 that the BSP's transfer and pressure tactics vis-à-vis the

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[17] Interview, December 28, 2003, Alipura.
[18] Interviews with BSP cadres in Alipura and Bhoolni.
[19] I make this argument in section 2.4.

administration, apart from making upper caste bureaucrats bend to the will of a SC Chief Minister, have also helped shape a *bahujan*-friendly state. Nowhere has evidence of a *bahujan*-friendly administration emerged more clearly than in the BSP's institution of the *tehsil diwas*. The BSP required government officials at the level of the *tehsil* to be present once a week at a public forum, at which villagers were encouraged to bring their complaints, with Mayawati demanding, furthermore, that these be addressed at the earliest. Chamars in Alipura and Dalki were very appreciative of this effort. The *tehsil diwas*, together with the BSP's orders to government officials to report to work by 9 am sharp, fed their perception that the BSP was interested in making the government serve the people, rather than the reverse. While speaking of the BSP in this way, Chamars, furthermore, juxtaposed it to the SP, which was seen as being aligned against the poor, and hand in glove with corrupt state agents, a view that was reinforced by that party's decision to discontinue with the *tehsil diwas* when it came to power.[20]

In Western Uttar Pradesh, the BSP's large-scale transfer of police officers served the purpose of breaking the criminal-police nexus that Muzaffarnagar, in particular, is notorious for. Jats and Gujjars comprise the vast majority of criminals in Western Uttar Pradesh ; being farming castes, their crimes often relate to illegal takeover of land, intimidation and murder of landless labourers, and molestation and rape of female agricultural labour. The criminal-police nexus has, consequently, had especially adverse consequences for the low caste poor, with the police refusing to register cases against offenders from dominant castes. The BSP's transferring of SC police officers to key posts, and appointment of SCs as Police Station In-Charge in rural areas, helped break the stranglehold of entrenched interests, thus providing a large measure of relief to agricultural labour.

The presence of SCs in the higher echelons of the police force, furthermore, allowed Chamars to follow up encounters with corrupt subordinates with complaints to senior officials. A Chamar respondent in Alipura had the following story to tell in this regard.

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[20] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Alipura and Dalki.

I had applied for a government job, and had written the entrance exam. A few months later, the police came to the village, bringing the results with them. There were four of us in the village who had written the exam... the constables refused to let us have our results unless we paid them 50 rupees each. We told them we would settle this later, and did not pay them the money. We went to Meerut that afternoon, and lodged a complaint with the SP [Superintendent of Police]. He promised to look into the matter. A few days later, the results were delivered to us. We did not pay any bribes.[21]

It is telling that these young men chose to lodge their complaint, not with the Station Officer (SO) in charge of the local police station, but with the Superintendent of Police (SP) at the district police headquarters in Meerut. (The SP is the highest ranking civil police officer in the district.) It is even more telling that the SP, despite his rank, chose to give them a hearing. Both occurrences bear testimony to the degree to which the BSP succeeded in making the top tiers of the state accessible to the subaltern ; they also illustrate its method of using high-level appointees to address corruption prevailing at lower levels.

The BSP's implementation of the SC/ST Act has, however, proved less significant in the West than in the East. Amongst SCs, this Act has benefitted agricultural labour the most ; with vast sections of Chamar labour having disengaged from the agrarian sector in the West, the Act has proved less potent an instrument of psychological empowerment here, relative to the East.

And finally, while their disengagement from land, combined with SC reservations in *panchayats*, has tilted the balance of power in favour of Chamars at the grassroots in the West, the BSP's ascension to power has helped them go a step further, and achieve actual dominance in SC-majority villages in the region. Thus, Chamar interviewees in Alipura, responding to my questions about Jat dominance, would often joke that things were the other way around, and it was Chamars who beat up Jats these days. Upon investigation, this turned out to be more than just hyperbole. A Chamar *panchayat* member described the episode thus :

A fight broke out over the matter of drains. The *panchayat* had received money to get drains built in the village, so a meeting was called to discuss the issue. At the meeting, the Jats demanded that the drains be built so that their part of the village remain clean. They wanted all the dirt to come flowing to the Chamar neighbourhood. When no compromise could be reached, a scuffle started. More Jats came, to lend support to their side. But we [ie. Chamars] were more in number, so they stood no chance. We beat them up good and proper. We even

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[21] Interview, January 30, 2004, Alipura.

hit them with shoes. We won the battle, anyway, and the drains were built the way we wanted them.[22]

This was not the only episode either. Jats also got beaten up by Chamars another time, this time over a disagreement over where the village school should be located. The construction of a primary school was one of the items on the agenda of the AVP. Chamars wanted the school to be located so as not to have their children walk through the Jat neighbourhood on their way to class. Jats, on the other hand, wanted the school to be located nearer to where they lived. The Chamars won this fight as well, and had the school built where it suited them. Part of the reason why Chamars felt justified in having the drains, and the school, built their way, was that the money for both projects had come to the village during BSP rule.[23] As one Chamar respondent put it,   ·

Ajit [ie. Ajit Singh, a Jat leader] was not providing the money, was he? If he had, then it would have been a different matter. But the money was coming from *Behenji's* government, so it was only natural that we [ie. Chamars] would settle things the way we wanted to. The question of listening to them [ie. Jats] simply did not arise.[24]

This Chamar dominance has also taken the form of an aggressive politics of statues, in both town and countryside. Chamar-majority villages have, almost without exception, seen BSP supporters erect Ambedkar statues on *gaon sabha* land, and at what Jats complained were inconvenient spots. As one irate Jat respondent in Alipura put it,

The whole point of these statues has been to inconvenience us farmers. They deliberately plant them in places that makes it difficult for us to load our sugarcane, and drive our carts out. And then, if Ambedkar loses a hand or leg [ie. the statues get disfigured], they slap the [SC/ST] Act on us.[25]

Ambedkar statues have been no less of an issue in urban areas. The BSP's Chamar cadres in Hastinapur frequently recounted the following incident. They had made plans to erect an Ambedkar statue in Mawana Chowk, the main marketplace in Mawana, but BJP cadres, having got wind of these efforts, quickly made a statue of their own, and beat them to it. Baniyas, the trader caste who dominate the market

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[22] Interview, December 27, 2003, Alipura.
[23] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Alipura.
[24] Interview, December 27, 2003, Alipura.
[25] Interview, January 14, 2004, Alipura.

area, and who support the BJP, put up a statue of Subhas Chandra Bose (an upper caste figure, and an important leader of the nationalist movement) instead, naming the junction Subhas Chopla (Subhas Junction).[26]

2.3. THE BSP AND THE MATERIAL EMPOWERMENT OF CHAMAR LABOUR

This section analyses the efforts made by the BSP in the material realm. The BSP has pursued its goal of SC material empowerment via different routes : (1) job quotas ; (2) AVP ; and (3) land distribution. I discuss the party's efforts in each of these realms in turn.

Job Quotas

The BSP has made the flawless implementation of SC quotas an important plank of its policy agenda, arguing that the upper caste bias of Uttar Pradesh governments has led to reserved vacancies remaining unfilled for most of the post-independence period. But it is Chamars, mostly, who have benefitted from the BSP's zealous implementation of reservations ; amongst Chamars, furthermore, benefits have accrued mainly to the middle class. This is because of the educational edge that Chamars have had over other SCs, and that middle class Chamars have had over Chamar labour. When non-Chamar SCs have availed of quotas, it has been only to get menial positions (peons and sweepers) in the Class IV category. And in those few instances where Chamar candidates from working class backgrounds have "made it," the jobs have been of a clerical (Class III), rather than of an administrative, or executive (Class I and II), nature. This has, however, hardly detracted from the importance of these Class III successes, mainly on account of the inter-generational occupational mobility that they have brought about.

My fieldwork bears out the pattern described above.[27] The only non-Chamar SC community present in my fieldwork villages were Balmikis. Of Balmikis, there was only 1 in Alipura, Rampuri, Dalki and Mansurpur, taken together, who held a government job that involved work other than sweeping. Apart from 1 Balmiki in

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[26] Interviews with BSP cadres in Alipura and Mawana.

[27] Fieldwork, here, refers to a job profile study of SCs conducted in the four villages of Alipura, Rampuri, Dalki and Mansurpur.

Alipura, who held a clerical position (Class III), all other Balmikis employed by the state (a total of 4 in the above villages) worked as sweepers (Class IV). Coming to Chamars, there were 30 in Alipura who held government jobs. Of these, 16 held menial jobs (Class IV), 11 held clerical and low-level technical positions (Class III), whereas 3 were school teachers (Class II).

Of the 11 holding clerical jobs (Class III), four had fathers presently holding clerical positions, whereas two had had fathers, now retired, also holding clerical jobs. The remaining five all came from working class backgrounds. Of the three school teachers (Class II), one's father was a labourer, whereas the other two's fathers had held clerical posts in the government. It needs to be noted that of the six Chamars who came from working class backgrounds, and held Class II and III positions, only two were below 30 years of age. This attests to the increased competition that the Chamar poor have faced vis-à-vis quotas in recent years, following the BSP's rise to power. The BSP's aggressive pushing of reservations has made government jobs appear more accessible than ever to middle class Chamar youth, who have entered the fray in larger numbers, only to edge more and more of the poorer candidates out. It was, furthermore, only in the "below 30" age group that Class II and III positions, taken together, outnumbered Class IV jobs. In the "30-45" and "above 45" age categories, in contrast, there were more Chamars in Class IV positions. This attests to the accentuated pursuit of white collar government jobs amongst Chamar youth, relative to earlier periods.

There were a total of 17 Chamars holding government jobs in Dalki. Of these, 9 held menial jobs (Class IV), whereas 8 held clerical positions (Class III). There were no Chamars holding Class II positions. Of the 8 in the clerical category (Class III), two had fathers presently holding clerical jobs, whereas another 3 had had fathers, now retired, holding clerical jobs before them. The remaining 3 came from working class families. Like in Alipura, amongst those Chamars who held non-menial jobs and had working class backgrounds, there were fewer younger than older men. As in Alipura again, Class III jobs outnumbered Class IV jobs amongst Chamars less than 30 years of age, whereas the reverse was true of older Chamars.

The situation in Rampuri and Mansurpur, the two other villages where I studied the job profile of Chamar residents, was both similar and different to that of Alipura and Dalki. The situation was similar in that, of Chamars of working class background holding Class II and III jobs, there were fewer in the "below 30" category than in the other age groups. What was new, however, was the presence in these villages of Chamar professionals, and of private sector employees holding white collar jobs. Rampuri had 5 lawyers, and 3 teachers employed in private schools ; Mansurpur had 2 lawyers ; it also had 2 teachers and 1 doctor working in private colleges and a private clinic respectively. Rampuri and Mansurpur also underscored the crucial importance of cultural capital for younger Chamars, that the data from Alipura and Dalki pointed to as well. There were 2 father-and-son pairs amongst the 5 lawyers in Rampuri, for instance. The 2 teachers in Mansurpur were also similarly related.

To sum up, the concentration of Class II and III positions amongst younger Chamars suggests that Chamar youth are pursuing white collar government jobs with a zest today that was missing a few decades back. This pursuit has been fuelled by their parents' investment in their education, which has also picked up considerably, relative to earlier periods. But while this investment has been made by Chamars across the economic and literacy divide (with illiterate, working class parents taking care to see their children through high school, if not college), it is those Chamar youth who have had a head start (ie. come from literate and better-off families) who have reaped the fruits of this investment better. For the job profile data clearly suggests that Chamars born of illiterate, working class parents have found it difficult, especially in the last decade or so, to capture Class II and III jobs in the public sector.

And while the number of Chamars in the professions, and private sector, has been few (relative to those dependent on the state for jobs), here too, it is Chamar youth from educated and middle class backgrounds (frequently, with a parent already in the professions or private sector), who have found it easier to make the grade. This is definitely what the data from Mansurpur and Rampuri suggests. To assess the BSP's contribution then, we may conclude that while its aggressive quota politics has enabled more Chamars overall to avail of reservations, the BSP has clearly served

middle class Chamars a great deal better than the Chamar poor. In failing to devise provisions preventing better-off Chamars from siphoning off jobs provided by the state, the party has done little to ease the transition to non-labouring occupations for Chamar labour.

Ambedkar Village Programme (AVP)

We now turn to what has easily been the BSP's most visible effort on the material front, namely, the AVP. The AVP has been controversial because it has been driven by a logic of reverse discrimination, being used by the BSP to compensate SCs for the failure of earlier governments to tend to them. This logic has manifested itself in two ways : (1) the diversion of developmental funds from programmes catering to the general populace, and their concentration in SC-majority villages ; and (2) the privileging of SCs over non-SCs within selected villages.

The variation in the criterion adopted by different governments for choosing Ambedkar villages is a good pointer to the different priorities they have accorded to the SC constituency in the state. Initiated by the Mulayam Singh government in 1990, the AVP originally targeted villages with a SC population of 50 percent or more, providing them extra funds for the implementation of existing programmes for the poor. The period 1990-1995, however, saw only 5 villages selected per district annually, this being a time when the SP and BJP ruled the state.[28] But the formation of a BSP-BJP coalition in 1995, which saw the BSP exercise effective governmental power for the first time, led to important changes in the administration of the AVP. Mayawati, who headed the BSP-BJP government, widened the scope of the programme to include more villages ; thus, the number of villages selected that year rose to 10, in both Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts. Mayawati also issued an order laying out the principle of selection to be adopted in 1996-1997 : the order required officials to go beyond the 50 percent criterion, but also to adopt the descending order principle, ie. prioritize villages with higher SC population percentages. This new criterion was adopted by the AVP bureaucracy in 1996-1997, through the duration of President's Rule in the state.

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[28] While the BSP participated in the government from 1993-1995, its status as a junior coalition partner allowed the SP to enforce its own priorities, rather than those of its ally.

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Table 4.6 : Selection of Villages under the Ambedkar Village Programme : Meerut District (1990-2003)

	Number Of Villages Selected Annually	SC Population Percentage in Selected Villages		
		50% And Above	20-49%	Below 20%
1990-1995 SP and BJP Governments	5 (100%)	5 (100%)		
1995-1996 BSP Government	10 (100%)	10 (100%)		
1996-1997 President's Rule	96 (100%)	21 (21.87%)	75 (78.12%)	
1997-1998 BSP Government	57 (100%)		38 (66.66%)	19 (33.3%)
1998-1999 BJP Government	53 (100%)		13 (24.52%)	40 (75.4%)
1999-2000 BJP Government	50 (100%)		11 (22%)	39 (78%)
2000-2001 BJP Government	50 (100%)		11 (22%)	39 (78%)
2001-2002 BJP Government	51 (100%)		14 (27.45%)	37 (72.5%)
2002-2003 BSP Government	57 (100%)		53 (92.98%)	4 (7.01%)

Source : District Rural Development Agency, Meerut.
Note : The villages selected in 1999-2000 were re-selected in 2000-2001, the aim being to complete all AVP programmes therein.

With SC-majority villages having been exhausted, Mayawati, upon her return to power in March 1997, selected villages strictly in accordance with the descending order principle. This distinguished her administration of the AVP from the BJP's ; the period of BJP rule (1998-2002) that ensued, following the collapse of the BSP-BJP alliance, saw villages with SC populations of less than 20 percent, ie. predominantly upper caste and OBC villages, predominating the selection list. (See Tables 4.6. and 4.7.) The BJP, in its urge to redirect AVP benefits to its own

constituency, also neglected those villages that the BSP had selected earlier, in which AVP schemes still remained unfinished.

Table 4.7 : Selection of Villages under the Ambedkar Village Programme : Muzaffarnagar District (1990-2003)

	Muzaffarnagar District			
	Number Of Villages Selected Annually	SC Population Percentage in Selected Villages		
		50% And Above	20-49%	Below 20%
1990-1995 SP and BJP Governments	5 (100%)	5 (100%)		
1995-1996 BSP Government	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	·	
1996-1997 President's Rule	67 (100%)	8 (11.94 %)	59 (88.05%)	
1997-1998 BSP Government	89 (100%)		43 (48.31%)	46 (51.68%)
1998-1999 BJP Government	89 (100%)		26 (29.21%)	63 (70.78%)
1999-2000 BJP Government	86 (100%)		18 (20.93%)	68 (79.06%)
2000-2001 BJP Government			18 (20.93%)	68 (79.06%)
2001-2002 BJP Government	80 (100%)		23 (28.75%)	57 (71.25%)
2002-2003 BSP Government	99 (100%)	6 (6.66%)	42 (46.66%)	51 (56.66%)

Source : District Rural Development Agency, Muzaffarnagar.

The SP too sought to channel programme benefits away from SCs. Upon forming the government in 2003, Mulayam Singh passed an order that made village selection the prerogative of MLAs and MLCs (Members of the Legislative Council, the upper house of the Uttar Pradesh legislature), which politicized the process considerably. Given these circumstances, it was not surprising that SCs formed less than 20 percent of the populace in the majority of villages selected in 2003-2004. (See

Tables 4.8 and 4.9). The SP, moreover, renamed the AVP the Samagra Gram Vikas

Yojana, the use of the term *samagra* (meaning "entire" or "whole") signalling that it

intended to broaden the constituency of beneficiaries beyond SCs alone.[29]

Table 4.8 : Selection of Villages under the Samagra Gram
Vikas Yojana : Meerut District (2003-2004)

	Meerut District			
	Number Of Villages Selected	SC Population Percentage in Selected Villages		
		50% And Above	20-49%	Below 20%
2003-2004 SP Government	79 (100%)		26 (32.91%)	53 (67.08%)

Source : District Rural Development Agency, Meerut.

Table 4.9 : Selection of Villages under the Samagra Gram
Vikas Yojana : Muzaffarnagar District (2003-2004)

	Muzaffarnagar District			
	Number Of Villages Selected	SC Population Percentage in Selected Villages		
		50% And Above	20-49%	Below 20%
2003-2004 SP Government	90 (100%)		18 (20%)	72 (80%)

Source : District Rural Development Agency, Muzaffarnagar.

The AVP package consisted of the following eleven programmes :

(1) construction of a link road connecting the SC hamlet to the main road ;

(2) electrification ; (3) school construction ; (4) provision of clean drinking water

through the installation of handpumps ; (5) construction of toilets ; (6) construction

of drains ; (7) provision of irrigation facilities through free boring ; (8) the Intensive

Rural Development Programme (IRDP), which provided loans for dairying, poultry-

farming, bee-keeping, mushroom cultivation, setting up shops and other small

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[29] All data pertaining to the AVP presented so far in this section was obtained from the District Rural Development Agency, Meerut and Muzaffarnagar.

businesses ; (9) the Indira Awas Yojana (Indira Housing Scheme – IAY), which provided subsidized housing ; (10) widow pensions ; and (11) old age pensions.[30]

As I have argued in Chapter 3, the AVP did a better job of providing amenities, building infrastructure, and improving sanitation, than of raising incomes and nurturing economic mobility. In this regard, the AVP's impact was much the same in Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh. But the AVP's implementation at the grassroots differed in one important respect in the two regions. Chamars, who dominated *panchayats* in many Ambedkar villages (Ambedkar villages with large SC populations usually had SC, and de facto, Chamar, reservations) channelled AVP benefits selectively to coethnics in the West ; in the East, however, *panchayats* discriminated less in the delivery of programme benefits, which were shared equally between Chamars and other SCs. Since most Chamars active in *panchayat* politics were affiliated to the BSP, this had the effect of alienating non-Chamar *bahujans* from the BSP in the West.

AVP politics in Alipura fitted this pattern well. Of the 10 IRDP loans disbursed in 1995-1996, the year the programme came to the village, 7 went to SCs, and 3 to OBCs. Of the 7 that went to SCs, 6 were made out to Chamars, and 1 to a Balmiki. Of the 8 houses constructed under the IAY, again, 7 belonged to Chamar households, and 1 to a Balmiki household. And as many as 12 of the 15 beneficiaries who had toilets constructed in their homes that year were Chamars, the other three being OBCs.[31] No Balmikis thus benefitted from the toilet scheme. It was little wonder, then, that Balmikis in the village did not vote for the BSP. Balmikis, it may be noted, had benefitted from the BSP's efforts in the symbolic and psychological realm, but this did not suffice on its own to win their support. For the ethnic favouritism that drove the politics of the AVP portrayed the BSP as a Chamar party, and hence undeserving of the Balmiki vote.

Thus, to the extent that AVP benefits helped SCs improve their quality of life, these benefits accrued to Chamars disproportionately, compared to other SCs. In this sense alone, the AVP was less of a success than the BSP leadership had envisaged, for the programme had been devised keeping all SCs in mind. This was,

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[30] Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution : The Bahujan Samaj Party in North India* (New Delhi : Sage, 2002), 126-131, 148.
[31] Interview with the VDO, January 3, 2004, Alipura.

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however, the case only in Western Uttar Pradesh, for reasons we will discuss in section 4.

Land Distribution

The BSP's efforts vis-à-vis land have taken on three main thrusts in the West : (1) distributing new *gaon sabha* plots to SCs ; (2) regularizing unauthorized possession of *gaon sabha* land by SCs ; and (3) enforcing possession of plots previously allotted to SCs.

Before discussing these programmes, however, I briefly lay out the two factors that have operated in tandem to define the party's land agenda in the region. The first has been the limited availability of *gaon sabha* land in Western Uttar Pradesh. There is less *gaon sabha* land available for new allotments in the West, relative to the East, on account of land consolidation having made better progress in the former region.[32] The second factor has to do with the fact that the BSP faces less pressure to attend to the land situation prevailing among SCs in the West. The vast section of Chamar labour has shifted to the urban and industrial sector, and has access to non-agrarian sources of income, here. They are as such less dependent on land, and more geared towards seeking employment in the modern sector of the economy. As one BAMCEF official put it, while it is true that the BSP has been constrained by the limited availability of land, it has also sought to achieve less vis-à-vis land here.[33] Land has not been a priority on the BSP's agenda, because poor SCs, and especially Chamars, have not seen the issue of land as key to the problem of economic empowerment, in contrast to the east.

In what follows, I present data pertaining to the allocation of new *gaon sabha* plots, and regularization of unauthorized possession. This data is available for the following units : Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts, Mawana and Jansath *tehsils* (located in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts respectively), and the villages of

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[32] Interview with the Commissioner, Consolidation, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, August 7, 2004. D.M. Diwakar, Professor of Economics at the Giri Institute of Development Studies, Lucknow, also confirmed that better progress had been made vis-à-vis consolidation in Western Uttar Pradesh in course of a conversation.
[33] Interview with BAMCEF official, March 12, 2004, Muzaffarnagar.

Alipura and Dalki (the former lying in Mawana *tehsil*, and the latter in Jansath *tehsil*).[34] Since allocation occurs in five categories, ie. cultivation, residence, fishery, pottery, and plantation, the data pertaining to allocation remains classified as such. Regularization, on the other hand, pertains only to land being cultivated by SCs. However, land administration officials have, in most cases, merged the regularization figures with the figures for cultivation, as a category of allocation ; the regularization data is, consequently, not available separately. Both categories of data are available for three years : 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004. While the BJP ruled the state in 2001-2002, the BSP was in power in 2002-2003, and the SP in 2003-2004, thereby making inter-party comparisons possible. Data pertaining to the enforcement of possession was not made available by the land administration ; I discuss the reasons why, since these throw some light on the BSP's land agenda, and its reception by state agents in the West.

Table 4.10 and 4.11 present the allocation and regularization data for Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts respectively. In Meerut, the area distributed by the BSP in the cultivation category in 2002-2003 was four times that distributed by the BJP in 2001-2002, and five times that distributed by the SP in 2003-2004. Coming to land distributed for residence purposes, the BSP, once again, distributed more land than both the BJP and SP. So far as plantation allocations were concerned, the BSP's figures, while slightly lower than the BJP's, were a good deal higher than the SP's. The fishery and pottery categories yielded the following results : the BSP's fishery figures were lower than those of the SP's, but higher than the BJP's, the reverse being true of its pottery figures, which were lower than the BJP's, but higher than the SP's. It may be noted that the BSP's figures in Meerut stood highest in what are two significant categories for SCs, ie. cultivation and residence.

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[34] Mawana and Jansath *tehsils* were chosen because Alipura and Dalki, my main fieldwork villages, lie within them. Meerut district has three *tehsils* : Sardhana, Mawana and Meerut, and Muzaffarnagar district five : Kairana, Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Budhana, and Jansath.

Table 4.10 : Allocation of Gaon Sabha Land : Meerut District (2001-2004)

	Cultivation	Residence	Fishery	Pottery	Plantation
2001-2002 (BJP)	51. 135 Hectares to 192 Beneficiaries (SC : 141 ; OBC: 50 ; Others : 1)	6.177 Hectares to 800 Beneficiaries (SC : 471 ; OBC: 69 ; Others : 260)	39.247 Hectares to 32 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 20 ; Fishing Cooperatives : 2 ; Others : 10)	2.536 Hectares to 45 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 45)	23.295 Hectares to 67 Beneficiaries (SC : 43 ; Women : 2 ; Others : 22)
2002-2003 (BSP)	246. 963 Hectares to 964 Beneficiaries (SC : 668 ; OBC: 286 ; Others : 10)	10.073 Hectares to 997 Beneficiaries (SC : 923 ; OBC: 63 ; Others : 11)	71.111 Hectares to 42 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 36 ; Fishing Cooperatives : 6)	1.357 Hectares to 51 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 51)	21.929 Hectares to 76 Beneficiaries (SC : 66 ; Women : 10)
2003-2004 (SP)	47.390 Hectares to 247 Beneficiaries (SC : 106 ; OBC : 117 : Others : 24)	5.361 Hectares to 542 Beneficiaries (SC : 410 ; OBC : 132)	80.783 Hectares to 67 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 50 ; Fishing Cooperatives : 2 ; Others : 15)	1.141 Hectares to 32 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 32)	11.842 Hectares to 78 Beneficiaries (SC : 23 ; Landless : 11; Women : 26 ; Others : 18)

Source : District Land Records Clerk (DLRC), Meerut District.

Notes : Since plots in the cultivation, residence, fishery and pottery categories are mostly made out to male heads of households, "women" have been constituted as a separate category of beneficiaries vis-a-vis plantation plots.

The data from Muzaffarnagar only confirms the Meerut pattern. Here too, the BSP's figures in the cultivation and residence categories trumped those of the BJP's and SP's, in the case of cultivation, by a wide margin. The BSP's plantation figures, while being surpassed by the BJP's, themselves surpassed the SP's. Coming to fishery, the BSP's figures ranked second, being lower than the SP's, but higher than the BJP's.

Table 4.11 : Allocation of Gaon Sabha Land : Muzaffarnagar District (2001-2004)

	Cultivation	Residence	Fishery	Pottery	Plantation
2001-2002 (BJP)	37.14 Hectares to 143 Beneficiaries (SC : 67 ; OBC: 69 ; Others : 7)	6.146 Hectares to 502 Beneficiaries (SC : 239 ; OBC: 197 ; Others : 66)	56.072 Hectares to 50 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 10 ; Fishing Cooperatives : 38 ; Others : 2)	-	98.193 Hectares to 20 Beneficiaries (SC : 11 ; Landless : 8 ; Others : 1)
2002-2003 (BSP)	293.105 Hectares to 1207 Beneficiaries (SC : 908 ; OBC: 238 ; Others : 61)	15.208 Hectares to 1574 Beneficiaries (SC : 1235 ; OBC: 273 ; Others : 66)	70.887 Hectares to 63 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 63)	-	39.584 Hectares to 136 Beneficiaries (SC : 87 ; Landless : 23 ; Others : 26)
2003-2004 (SP)	115.637 Hectares to 497 Beneficiaries (SC : 401 ; OBC : 77 : Others : 19)	10.20 Hectares to 850 Beneficiaries (SC : 626 ; OBC : 213 : others :11)	99.614 Hectares to 70 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 70)	1.638 Hectares to 28 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 28)	24.286 Hectares to 107 Beneficiaries (SC : 70 ; Landless : 16; Women : 21)

Source : DLRC, Muzaffarnagar District.
Note : Of the 98.193 hectares distributed by the BJP in the plantation category in 2001-2002, 94.394 hectares went to a state-sponsored fruit-growing venture, listed under "others."

Tables 4.12 and 4.13 provide the figures for Mawana and Jansath *tehsils*. The figures in the cultivation, residence and plantation categories show that a much greater area of land was allotted by the BSP than the other two parties, in both Mawana and Jansath. In Mawana, the area distributed for cultivation purposes by the BSP was double that distributed by the BJP. The BSP's cultivation figures were also, notably, 32 times greater than the SP's. In the residence category again, the area allotted by the BSP was double that allotted by the BJP, and seven times that allotted by the SP. The plantation figures showed a similar, though relatively smaller, discrepancy.

Turning to Jansath, the BSP's figures for cultivation allotments surpassed the BJP's by an extraordinary margin ; the area allotted was 51 times greater. In the residence category, the BSP allotted 19 times the area allotted by the BJP. The plantation figures yielded much the same pattern.

Table 4.12 : Allocation of Gaon Sabha Land : Mawana Tehsil, Meerut District (2001-2004)

	Cultivation	Residence	Fishery	Pottery	Plantation
2001-2002 (BJP)	14. 073 Hectares to 57 Beneficiaries (SC : 52 ; OBC: 5)	1.607 Hectares to 175 Beneficiaries (SC : 163 ; OBC: 12)	18. 842 Hectares to 13 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 13)	0.784 Hectares to 17 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste :17)	5.353 Hectares to 19 Beneficiaries (SC : 19)
2002-2003 (BSP)	27. 418 Hectares to 162 Beneficiaries (SC : 158 ; OBC: 4)	3.210 Hectares to 321 Beneficiaries (SC : 305 ; OBC: 16)	16.819 Hectares to 12 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 12)	0.253 Hectares to 10 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste :10)	7.714 Hectares to 15 Beneficiaries (SC : 15)
2003-2004 (SP)	0.851 Hectares to 7 Beneficiaries (SC : 7)	0.443 Hectares to 45 Beneficiaries (SC : 45)	29.722 Hectares to 30 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 30)	0.151 Hectares to 12 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste :12)	0.445 Hectares to 3 Beneficiaries (SC : 3)

Source : Registrar Kanungo, Mawana Tehsil, Meerut District. The Registrar Kanungo is a land revenue official responsible for supervising the work of village *patwaris.*

Table 4.13 : Allocation of Gaon Sabha Land : Jansath Tehsil, Muzaffarnagar District (2001-2004)

	Cultivation	Residence	Fishery	Pottery	Plantation
2001-2002 (BJP)	0. 754 Hectares to 2 Beneficiaries (SC : 2)	0.110 Hectares to 21 Beneficiaries (SC : 19 ; OBC : 2)	13. 285 Hectares to 7 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 7)	-	0.792 Hectares to to 4 Beneficiaries (SC : 1; OBC : 3)
2002-2003 (BSP)	38.724 Hectares to 203 Beneficiaries (SC : 169 ; OBC: 34)	2.182 Hectares to 252 Beneficiaries (SC : 206 ; OBC: 46)	10.806 Hectares to 11 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 11)	-	5.565 Hectares to 19 Beneficiaries (SC : 12 ; OBC : 7)
2003-2004 (SP)	5.590 Hectares to 43 Beneficiaries (SC : 37 ; OBC : 6)	1.285 Hectares to 139 Beneficiaries (SC : 125 ; OBC: 14)	18.150 Hectares to 11 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 30)	1.001 Hectares to 9 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste :9)	5.025 Hectares to 11 Beneficiaries (SC : 11)

Source : Registrar Kanungo, Jansath Tehsil, Muzaffarnagar District.

I now briefly discuss the land situation in Alipura and Dalki, my fieldwork villages. Alipura had no *gaon sabha* land available for allotment, nor any cases of

unauthorized possession, by SCs, or by any other caste. The last time plots had been allotted in the village was in 1976, when the Congress government had awarded three house plots to Chamars. But all three Chamar beneficiaries retained possession of their plots [35] ; while Chamars possessed little land in the village, Chamar domination of the *panchayat* ruled out forcible occupation of *gaon sabha* plots by Jats. In Dalki ; Chamars had received plots in two lots, in 1975 and 1995, under Congress and BSP rule respectively. But all beneficiaries retained possession, like in Alipura [36] ; while Chamars did not dominate the *panchayat* in Dalki, their disengagement from land made it difficult for Gujjars and Thakurs, the two dominant castes in the village, to take over their plots, or intimidate them

I now turn to discuss the third arm of the BSP's land programme, ie. the enforcement of possession. I mentioned earlier that land administration officials in the West (at the level of both the district and the tehsil) declined to provide me figures. They did so on the ground that they had inflated achievement, and sent up fabricated data to the government. As one district-level officer put it,

There were only 15 cases of enforcement in Muzaffarnagar [district] that year [2002-2003]. But Mayawati was not going to be happy with such a small number. At the same time, we had to save our jobs. So we showed them a higher figure.[37]

Enforcement entailed getting dominant castes to move off land they had forcibly occupied, and had been cultivating for years ; enforcement was, thus, a much harder task than allocation. It was, consequently, not surprising that it was vis-à-vis enforcement that officials felt compelled to inflate data, rather than allocation or regularization. But this compulsion also spoke to something else, something that the allocation and regularization figures suggested, namely, that the BSP had pressured the land bureaucracy to deliver, much more so than any other party in the 1990s. This alone explains the large gap between the BSP's performance, on the one hand, and the SP's and BJP's on the other.

But a puzzle remained in that, while the party had pressured the land administration in both East and West, it was in the West alone that officials got away with fabrication. My fieldwork in Eastern Uttar Pradesh suggested an answer ; the

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[35] Interview with the *patwari*, December 31, 2003, Mawana.
[36] Interview with the *patwari*, March 16, 2004, Dalki.
[37] Interview, February 24, 2004, Muzaffarnagar.

BSP had supervised, and policed the bureaucracy, a lot more closely in the East, on account of the urgency of its land agenda there. In other words, while the BSP had far outdone the SP and BJP in the West, it had reserved its best efforts for the East, so far as land was concerned.

2.4. EXPLAINING CHAMAR LABOUR'S SUPPORT FOR THE BSP

Having discussed the psychological and material impact of BSP rule, we now ask : why have the Chamar poor chosen to support the party? Chamar labour have not gained much from the BSP's material politics. The impeccable quota regimes provided by BSP governments have benefitted mostly the Chamar middle class. Again, while the BSP's efforts in the realm of land have been sincere, the limited availability of *gaon sabha* land in Western Uttar Pradesh, and Chamar labour's dependence on the non-agricultural sector here, has made for a weaker land agenda, relative to the East. And the AVP has not allowed Chamar labour to effect any significant economic transition. While empowering the Chamar middle class disproportionately on the material front, the BSP's delivery of symbolic benefits has, on the other hand, been much more equitable. In this realm, the Chamar poor have gained just as much as their middle class coethnics. Given these circumstances, it would be reasonable to assume that poorer Chamars have voted for the BSP for symbolic reasons alone.

The data from my fieldwork, however, suggests otherwise. It suggests that that Chamar labour have voted for the BSP on material grounds, grounds that have had less to do with benefits delivered in the past, than those expected in the future. These expectations, again, have revolved less around land, or the AVP, than around government jobs, the area in which the BSP has done the least for the Chamar poor.

All the Chamar labourers I interviewed in Alipura and Dalki were BSP supporters. When asked why they voted for the party, the vast majority answered that the BSP was the party they counted on for securing jobs, if not for themselves, then for their children.[38] As one Chamar respondent put it :

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[38] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Alipura and Dalki.

Whatever lives we have lived, we have lived. But we do not want that life for our children. We do not want them to earn their living as labourers. It has been difficult, but we have tried to educate them. We have two sons, and a daughter. My elder son is in college now, the younger one is in school. We have hopes that they will get government jobs some day. I know they will have to study very hard. I tell them all the time, 'Study hard, concentrate. You must write your [qualifying] exams well, and get something.' When Behenji is there, there is hope. This is the only party that is concerned about us, about filling SC quotas. We [ie. SCs] pray that the BSP comes back to power soon. Then there is a chance that my son will have a good future. [39]

Respondents in Alipura cited the instances of the two village boys who had "made it" in recent years, despite coming from working class backgrounds. Many working class parents saw them as having set standards for other youth to emulate.[40] A Chamar parent, elaborating on this theme, had the following to say :

I tell my son, 'Work hard, and you will succeed. But you have to work hard.' Look at Ajit. He was a very serious boy. Other boys would play in the evenings, and waste their time. Not he. He was always studying. He was very disciplined. And see, he is a teacher in a government school now, and his father is so proud of him. We have great hopes of the BSP, but even the BSP cannot do magic. Can it? It can only help us if we help ourselves. Help ourselves, meaning, study hard. So I tell my boy, 'Learn from Ajit Bhaiyya [brother].' [41]

The Chamar poor's support of the BSP, thus, had little to do with the issues of land and AVP benefits ; it turned around quotas, and public sector jobs instead. Yet, it was with respect to quotas that the BSP had benefitted Chamar labour the least, which suggested that their vote turned, not so much around the party's past performance, as future expectations they had of it. I explain the emergence of these expectations below.

While the BSP's quota politics helped only a few amongst the Chamar poor get government jobs, these few instances of success helped fuel a sense of possibility, and a spirit of "can do," amongst Chamar labour at large. This confidence was also bolstered by the pursuit of education that the move to urban and industrial occupations had engendered. With Chamar children across the class barrier now attending school and college (though with the quality of education varying across the class divide), there was reason for Chamar labour to feel more upbeat about their chances of procuring jobs, relative to earlier years. But crucially, the BSP's record vis-

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[39] Interview, December 30, 2003, Alipura
[40] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Alipura.
[41] Interview, December 26, 2003, Alipura.

a-vis quotas provided Chamars a critical peg on which to hang their hopes. It was expected that BSP governments, via their forceful implementation of reservations, would keep state sector jobs coming in a steady flow.

Chamar labour thus saw the success of their educational efforts as being dependent, in an important way, on the BSP ; BSP leaders, for their part, intervened frequently to turn this discourse around, emphasizing the "helplessness of the BSP" when confronted with the "laziness of Chamars," the point being that it was only when Chamars took it upon themselves to "persevere and study" was it possible for the party to "help them out." [42] This position, by placing some of the responsibility for success on the Chamar poor themselves, prevented the party from being engulfed by pressure from below. But it also further encouraged the pursuit of education amongst Chamar labour, leading to a still greater focus on jobs.

A puzzle however remains : what explains the Chamar poor's expectations that the BSP would deliver them jobs in the future, when it had not done so (at least to the extent desirable) in the past? I have argued in Chapter 2 that Chamar labour has trusted in the BSP's commitment to a material agenda, and has understood the party's shortcomings as arising, not from a lack of will, but of unfavourable circumstances over which it had no control. The BSP has faced a good deal of resistance from other parties when it has come to implementing pro-*bahujan* programmes ; it is this resistance that has been understood by Chamar labour as hindering the party's material performance so far. Many of my Chamar respondents thus referred to the SP's frequent reversal of quota-filling orders issued by the Mayawati government. [43]

The perception of the BSP, and even more importantly, of Mayawati, as being hemmed in by obstacles posed by conservative forces, has also fostered sympathy for the party and the leader, and has led poorer Chamars to excuse the BSP for not delivering the goods. Mayawati has, indeed, come to be seen by many Chamar women as a heroic figure : not only a lower caste leader pitted against upper

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[42] Speech by Isam Singh, who was then a MP in the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of Parliament, at a party meeting in Bhopa, Muzaffarnagar, March 2, 2004. This point was also frequently made by BSP cadres at village-level meetings with Chamar voters.
[43] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Alipura and Dalki.

caste forces, but also a (single, and hence especially vulnerable) woman battling it out in an arena dominated by men. As a female brick-kiln worker in Dalki put it :

This is what we [gesturing to the other women sitting nearby] say – whatever she [Mayawati] has done, she has done despite great difficulties. She has made great sacrifices for us – she has not married, she has no children – it has all been so that people from her caste can improve. It is not easy, for a Chamar woman alone to achieve what she wants to achieve. We are not so ungrateful that we will not vote for her because our men did not get jobs during her time. And how would they get jobs? Has the BJP allowed her to do anything? We will have to wait for the day when we [ie. Chamars] have a government of our own. Then you will see what she does.[44]

The belief, in other words, was that the BSP would deliver, but only on forming a majority government. Unfettered by coalition partners, the party would then be free to implement its own agenda ; in the context of Western Uttar Pradesh, this would involve action in the realm of quotas that would benefit the Chamar poor, unlike in earlier periods.[45] Chamar labour thus trusted the BSP's material commitments sufficiently not to shift support in the interim period, through the time it took for it to reach a position when it could cater adequately to their interests.

3. Asymmetric Representation and the BSP's Different Contracts

3.1. CHAMAR LABOUR AND THE COSTS OF SUPPORTING THE BSP

Section 2 discusses the BSP's efforts to deliver material and psychological benefits to the Chamar poor. But apart from trying to empower this constituency, the BSP has also imposed burdens on it, burdens that Chamars have borne without withdrawing their support. For Chamars have supported the BSP at a cost, that has increased steadily over time, as the party has nominated, first, non-Chamar subalterns (Muslims, non-Chamar SCs, and lower backwards), and then, in 1996 and after, upper backwards and upper castes. The increased nomination of non-Chamar candidates has been accomplished by cutting into the Chamar share of tickets, which has robbed Chamars of the psychological benefits flowing from coethnic

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[44] Interview, March 13, 2004, Dalki.
[45] The majority BSP government of 2007 has, indeed, broken fresh ground in the realm of quotas, having extended them beyond the public sector to all projects undertaken under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiative. The PPP has, in turn, formed the basis of the New Economic Policy adopted in Uttar Pradesh in 2007.

representation, as well as material patronage, delivered by legislators to their "own" constituencies. BSP legislators from dominant castes have also hurt the interests of subaltern voters, as they have sought to advance the interests of their coethnics, where these interests have clashed. As such, an adequate account of Chamar support has to show, not only what the BSP has done to deserve this support, but also why such support has been forthcoming, despite the costs imposed on this constituency by the party.

The Situation in Non-Reserved Constituencies

A look at the caste background of BSP candidates, nominated in state assembly constituencies in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts over the period 1989-2007, illustrates my point about the declining coethnic representation of Chamar voters over time. (See tables 4.14 and 4.15 below.) To focus on the non-reserved constituencies alone, the 1989-1996 period, marked predominantly by *bahujan* nominations in both districts, finds Chamar candidates equally matched by lower backward candidates from Hindu and Muslim communities in Meerut, and outnumbered by the latter in Muzaffarnagar. In neither district, therefore, do Chamar candidatures trump those of non-Chamar *bahujans* during this phase. Moreover, it is as far back as in the 1993 elections that we have Chamars last receiving tickets in Meerut, the date going back still further to the 1991 elections in Muzaffarnagar.

While 1998 has been widely seen as the year marking the BSP's non-*bahujan* turn, upper castes and upper backwards have been nominated by the party as early as in the 1996 elections in the two districts concerned. 2 of the BSP's 4 nominations in non-reserved constituencies in Meerut, and 1 of its 4 nominations in such constituencies in Muzaffarnagar, went to non-*bahujans* in 1996. The pattern remained much the same in the 2002 elections ; non-*bahujans* were nominated, but did not outnumber *bahujans*. What is remarkable about the 1996 and 2002 elections is the complete exhaustion of the *bahujan* category of candidates by lower backwards, indicating that upper castes and upper backwards were accommodated by the BSP at the expense specifically of SCs, rather than of all subaltern castes. This becomes still more evident from a consideration of the 2007 data. The proportion of non-*bahujan* candidates shot up drastically in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar in 2007 ; all 5 BSP

candidates nominated in non-reserved constituencies in Meerut, and 4 of the 7 BSP candidates nominated in such constituencies in Muzaffarnagar, came from upper backward and upper caste communities that year. But of the three *bahujan* candidates nominated in Muzaffarnagar, all came from lower backward castes.

Table 4.14 : Caste Background of Candidates Nominated by the BSP in State Assembly Constituencies in Meerut District (1989-2007)

	1989 State Assembly Elections	1991 State Assembly Elections	1993 State Assembly Elections	1996 State Assembly Elections	2002 State Assembly Elections	2007 State Assembly Elections
Reserved Constituencies : 2	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 1	Nominations : 1	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 2
	Chamar (SC) : 2	Chamar (SC) : 1	Chamar (SC) : 1	Chamar (SC) : 2	Chamar (SC) : 2	Chamar (SC) : 2
Non-Reserved Constituencies : 5	Nominations : 5		Nominations : 1	Nominations : 4	Nominations : 5	Nominations : 5
	Chamar (SC) : 3 Muslim (Lower Backward) : 2		Chamar (SC) : 1	Saini (Lower Backward) : 1 Gujjar (Upper Backward) : 1 Khatri (Upper Caste) : 1 Muslim (Lower Backward) : 1	Saini (Lower Backward) : 1 Gujjar (Upper Backward) : 1 Baniya (Upper Caste) : 1 Muslim (Lower Backward) : 2	Gujjar (Upper Backward) : 1 Jat (Upper Backward) : 2 Baniya (Upper Caste) : 1 Khatri (Upper Caste) : 1

Source : BSP, Meerut District Unit. (The data provided by the Election Commission of India marks candidates as belonging to the SC or "general" ie. non-SC, category, but does not provide any further information pertaining to their caste background. Detailed information pertaining to the caste background of candidates was thus obtained from the BSP office.)

Notes : (1) The two reserved state assembly constituencies in Meerut district are Hastinapur and Siwalkhas. The five non-reserved state assembly constituencies are Meerut, Meerut Cantonment, Kithore, Kharkhauda, and Sardhana. (2) While the BSP did not contest from Sardhana in 1991, the election results for all the other constituencies in Meerut (apart from Siwalkhas) that year were countermanded by the Election Commission. The 1993 elections took place before by-elections in these constituencies could be arranged ; the Election Commission, moreover, had no records specifying the names of the original candidates. (3) The BSP had a seat-sharing arrangement with the SP in 1993, and thus contested from only two constituencies in Meerut (Hastinapur and Kithore) that year. The winning candidate in Hastinapur, however, died soon after the elections, following which a by-election was held. The data here presents the result of the by-election. (4) The BSP did not contest from Kharkhauda in 1996.

Table 4.15 : Caste Background of Candidates Nominated by the BSP in State Assembly Constituencies in Muzaffarnagar District (1989-2007)

	1989 State Assembly Elections	1991 State Assembly Elections	1993 State Assembly Elections	1996 State Assembly Elections	2002 State Assembly Elections	2007 State Assembly Elections
Reserved Constituencies : 2	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 1	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 2
	Chamar (SC) : 2	Chamar (SC) : 2	Chamar (SC) : 1	Chamar (SC) : 2	Chamar (SC) : 2	Chamar (SC) : 2
Non-Reserved Constituencies : 7	Nominations : 5	Nominations : 3	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 4	Nominations : 6	Nominations : 7
	Chamar (SC) : 2 Gadariya (Lower Backward) : 1 Muslim (Lower Backward) : 2	Gadariya (Lower Backward) : 1 Muslim (Lower Backward) : 2	Muslim : 2	Gadariya (Lower Backward) : 1 Kasyhap (Lower Backward) : 1 Jat (Upper Backward) : 1 Muslim (Lower Backward) : 1	Saini (Lower Backward) : 1 Gadariya (Lower Backward) : 1 Jat (Upper Backward) : 1 Muslim (Lower Backward) : 3	Saini (Lower Backward) : 1 Kasyhap (Lower Backward) : 2 Gujjar (Upper Backward) : 2 Jat (Upper Backward) : 2

Source : BSP, Muzaffarnagar District Unit.

Note : (1) The two reserved state assembly constituencies in Muzaffarnagar district are Jansath and Charthawal. The seven non-reserved state assembly constituencies are Morna, Khatauli, Muzaffarnagar, Kandhla, Baghra, Kairana, and ThanaBhawan. (2) The following seats were not contested by the BSP in the different elections : Baghra and Kandhla in 1989 ; Baghra, Kandhla, Kairana and Muzaffarnagar in 1991 ; Baghra, Kandhla, Kairana, Muzaffarnagar, Khatauli and Jansath in 1993 ; Baghra, Kairana, and Khatauli in 1996 ; and Kairana in 2002.

While the accommodation of Chamars within the party organization has secured some representation and patronage for the Chamar constituency, it has hardly succeeded in neutralizing the burdens imposed by the nomination of non-Chamar candidates. For the BSP has increasingly made way for non-Chamar *bahujans* and non-*bahujans* within the party organization as well. This is clear if we consider the rules governing the appointment of party officials at the level of both the district, and the state assembly constituency. A state assembly constituency is divided by the BSP into 20 sectors for organizational purposes. Each sector is headed by a Sector Committee, comprising a President, who has to be a SC, a General Secretary, who has to be either a Muslim, or Hindu lower backward, and a Secretary, who can

belong to any caste, but is most often a member of a non-Chamar community with a significant presence in the sector. Interestingly, it is the Secretary who represents the sector in the Vidhan Sabha Committee, the party unit responsible for the state assembly constituency as a whole. Over and above the secretaries from the 20 sectors, the Vidhan Sabha Committee comprises a President, a General Secretary, and a Coordinator ; the President has to be a SC, the General Secretary a Hindu lower backward or a Muslim, whereas the Coordinator usually belongs to an electorally significant, non-Chamar, caste.

In Hastinapur, only five of the 20 sector secretaries were Chamars, at the time I conducted fieldwork. Of the remaining 15, six were Muslims, two were Sikhs, four were Gujjars, and three were Jats. And while the President of the Vidhan Sabha Committee was a Chamar, the General Secretary and the Coordinator were both Gujjars. In Morna, Chamars fared even worse : only four of the 20 sector secretaries here were Chamars. Of the other 16, six were Muslims, four were Sainis, two were Gadariyas, three were Gujjars, and one was a Prajapati. The Vidhan Sabha Committee in Morna was presided over by a Chamar ; it had a Saini as General Secretary, and a Muslim as Coordinator.[46]

The pattern repeated itself at the level of the District Committee. The Coordinator of the Vidhan Sabha Committee represented the state assembly constituency in the District Committee. The District Committee thus comprised the coordinators of the state assembly constituencies falling within the district, as well as a President, a Vice-President, a General Secretary and a Treasurer. While the President had to be a SC, and the General Secretary a Hindu lower backward or a Muslim, the other two positions usually went to non-Chamar castes with a sizeable presence in the district. Thus, while a Chamar presided over the District Committee in both Meerut and Muzaffarnagar, the General Secretary in Meerut was a Prajapati, and in Muzaffarnagar, a Saini. The Vice-President, in both cases, was a Muslim. The office of the Treasurer, again, was occupied by a Saini in Meerut, and by a Muslim in Muzaffarnagar.[47]

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[46] This data was obtained from the BSP assembly constituency units in Hastinapur and Morna.
[47] This data was obtained from the BSP district units in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar.

Thus, Chamars, who occupied the vast majority of posts in the party organization in the 1980s, have made way for other communities, most notably, Hindu and Muslim lower backwards, over time, which has limited their access to the only alternative source of patronage that was available, following the drying-up of coethnic nominations.

We now turn to discuss the BSP's politics of nominations, and its impact on Chamars, in my fieldsite, the state assembly constituency of Morna, specifically. Morna, on account of its demographics, has seen the BSP grant tickets to lower backwards from Hindu and Muslim communities alone ; it is thus one of those non-reserved seats that have bypassed the non-*bahujan* turn. (See table 4.16 below.) But Morna also demonstrates that non-Chamar *bahujan* legislators can impose no fewer burdens on Chamar voters than non-*bahujan* ones. The BSP had won this seat for the first time in the 2002 elections, and RajPal Saini, who was from the lower backward Saini caste, was the incumbent BSP MLA at the time I conducted fieldwork in the constituency. My interviews with Chamar respondents indicated that Saini's election had not only channelled patronage, and the symbolic benefits of coethnic representation, away from Chamars, but had also hurt Chamar voters in a directly adverse way. Saini had, indeed, even neglected his own caste brethren, and lower backwards generally, choosing to favour some influential Jats and Muslims, instead.[48]

Table 4.16 : Names and Caste Background of Candidates Nominated by the BSP in Morna State Assembly Constituency, Muzaffarnagar District (1989-2007)

	1989 State Assembly Elections	1991 State Assembly Elections	1993 State Assembly Elections	1996 State Assembly Elections	2002 State Assembly Elections	2007 State Assembly Elections
Morna (Non-Reserved Constituency)	Mansingh Pal : Gadariya (Lower Backward)	Shavyul : Muslim (Lower Backward)	Murtaza : Muslim (Lower Backward)	Nafeez Kalia : Muslim (Lower Backward)	RajPal Singh Saini : Saini (Lower Backward)	RajPal Singh Saini: Saini (Lower Backward)

Source : BSP, Muzaffarnagar District Unit.

Saini had, thus, directed development funds to villages with heavy Jat and Muslim populations, where incumbent Jat and Muslim *pradhans* had used their influence over coethnics to get him votes. Chamars and lower backwards (Sainis included) who had voted for him, thus, went largely unrewarded, even in those cases

[48] Interviews with Chamar and lower backward respondents in Dalki, Mansurpur and Patewa.

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where Saini's good showing in a particular village had depended on their, rather than Jat or Muslim, support. As one Chamar respondent in Mansurpur put it,

All of us Chamars here [in Mansurpur] voted for him. But what did we get? Nothing. He got only two votes from Muslims in this village. Two votes. From Juned Khan and his mother. His mother was the only member of his family that Juned could persuade [to vote for the BSP]. But the MLA was grateful, and cemented the road running through the Muslim neighbourhood. Juned's house, mind you, stands directly by this road. What we have to say is, it is a good thing to be grateful, but where is this gratitude when it comes to Chamars? [49]

Apart from ignoring SCs and lower backwards, Saini had also occasionally affected their interests in an adverse way. Morna had seen some cases where landed Muslims had raped and murdered children from Chamar and lower backward communities. The most frequently cited instances pertained to the rape of a Chamar girl by a member of the Muslim *pradhan's* family in Sikri, and the rape and murder of a Saini girl by Muslims in Tandera. Saini, in all of these cases, had used his influence with the police to subvert justice, and prevent the offenders from being booked.[50]

When asked whether they would vote for Saini if he were nominated again, however, most Chamars answered yes. They argued that they would vote for any candidate nominated by the BSP, and that their vote designated support not for the candidate, but for the party.[51] As one Chamar respondent in Patewa put it,

Saini means nothing to us. He is only an instrument for us to get power. When that happens, it is Behenji who will decide things in Lucknow. He has no choice ... he has to obey her. We told him this openly when he came to Bhopa a few months back. We said, 'Do not think for one moment that we voted for you. We voted for the elephant [the BSP's electoral symbol], for Mayawati.' He was very angry. [52]

Chamars in Western Uttar Pradesh have, thus, seen non-Chamar nominations as a mode of capturing power, as a measure that would allow the BSP leadership to cater to them in the long term. It is for this reason that they have chosen to suffer the burdens these nominations have entailed, though their complaints have been varied and many. It is, indeed, these complaints that have distinguished the Chamar response to the BSP's multiethnic turn in the East and West. Chamars in Eastern Uttar Pradesh have harboured far fewer complaints about

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[49] Interview, March 23, 2004, Mansurpur.
[50] Interviews with Chamar and lower backward respondents in Dalki, Mansurpur and Patewa.
[51] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Dalki, Mansurpur, Ala Heri and Patewa.
[52] Interview, March 11, 2004, Patewa.

their treatment at the hands of BSP MLAs. This is not because they have suffered less injustice, but because they have seen multiethnic nominations as not only a means for securing benefits, but also for building the *bahujan samaj*. I develop this argument better in Chapter 5.

The Situation in Reserved Constituencies

We have, so far, discussed the burdens faced by Chamars in non-reserved constituencies. It would be reasonable to expect that Chamars have fared better in reserved constituencies, since the BSP has nominated mostly Chamar candidates here. (This has, at least, been the case in Hastinapur, Siwalkhas, Jansath, and Charthawal, the four reserved state assembly constituencies in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts. See tables 4.14 and 4.15.) My second fieldsite, Hastinapur, did not, however, enable a testing of this hypothesis, since the BSP had never won the seat so far.[53] But Hastinapur as a site, did allow for an investigation of why the BSP had fared so poorly in reserved constituencies, compared to the SP and the BJP.

Table 4.17 : Names and Caste Background of Candidates Nominated by the BSP in Hastinapur State Assembly Constituency, Meerut District (1989-2007)

	1989 State Assembly Elections	1991 State Assembly Elections	1993 State Assembly Elections	1996 State Assembly Elections	2002 State Assembly Elections	2007 State Assembly Elections
Hastinapur (Reserved Constituency)	Gopal Kali : Chamar (SC)	-	Mukesh Siddharth : Chamar (SC)	Harbhajan Singh : Chamar (SC)	Yogesh Verma : Chamar (SC)	Yogesh Verma : Chamar (SC)

Source : BSP, Meerut District Unit.

The BSP's nomination of Chamars was an important reason why it failed to win in reserved seats for much of the 1990s. While Chamar candidates received the Chamar vote, they did not receive much support from non-Chamar SCs, who vote for the BSP only when it nominates coethnics. Non-SCs, not having the option of voting for coethnics, voted on a partisan basis in reserved seats, which placed the BSP at a disadvantage, relative to the SP and BJP. These latter two parties also

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[53] Indeed, none of the reserved constituencies in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar made it possible to study the ties between Chamar voters and Chamar MLAs ; while the BSP's first victory in these constituencies came in Charthawal in 2002, the Charthawal MLA's subsequent defection to the SP made Charthawal an atypical site, given that Chamar defections from the BSP were rare.

benefitted from nominating non-Chamars, which brought them the non-Chamar SC vote ; this vote, combined with the non-SC support that they received, resulted in a winning combination, leading to SP and BJP victories. It was this formula that explained Prabhu Dayal Balmiki's win in Hastinapur in the 2002 state assembly elections ; being a SP candidate, he received both Muslim and Gujjar votes,[54] which together with Balmiki support, helped carry him through. A similar logic worked to facilitate Atul Khatik's victory in Hastinapur in 1996, and Suresh Titauria's victory in Jansath in 1991 and 1993. Khatik was an independent running with BJP support, while Titauria was a BJP candidate ; both benefitted from a combination of upper caste and non-Chamar SC support, the latter accruing to them from coethnic Khatiks.[55]

The question will now arise as to what has prevented the BSP from nominating non-Chamar SCs. One part of the answer is that the BSP has been reluctant to alienate Chamars in reserved constituencies, given the sacrifices they have already been asked to make in non-reserved seats. The party has thus refrained from nominating non-Chamar candidates, particularly in those reserved seats with a large Chamar presence. But in constituencies like Hastinapur, where the nomination of a non-Chamar would have made a difference electorally, the BSP has been reined in by Chamar unwillingness to share the spoils of power with other SC communities. Chamar cadres in Hastinapur perceived other SCs as being undeserving of entitlements, and saw non-Chamar nominations as violating the principle of just deserts. An official associated with the Meerut district unit of the party articulated these Chamar sentiments well.

We Chamars are the only ones who have struggled. We are the only ones who have tried to overcome the obstacles that have tied SCs down. Only Chamars are aware, and educated ; you will not find Chamars doing dirty jobs anymore. These other communities are still dependent on the upper castes, on Jats. They are their *chamchas* [sycophants] ; they take sides with them, not us, when disputes arise. They have no pride, no awareness, no consciousness. They cannot expect the BSP to reward them when they have not struggled with the BSP. That is opportunism ; we will not tolerate it. [56]

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[54] Following the decline of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, the SP had become the party of choice for Gujjars, who saw Mulayam Singh as being sensitive to the concerns of farming castes. Gujjar-Jat rivalry prevented Gujjars from voting for the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) ; while the RLD catered to farming interests, it was seen as a party of Jats.

[55] Interviews with BSP cadres in Alipura and Mawana.

[56] Interview, December 21, 2003, Meerut.

This attitude, however, does not prevail amongst Chamars everywhere in the state, and speaks of the incomplete state of *bahujan* consolidation in Western Uttar Pradesh. Politics in reserved constituencies play out a little differently in the East, an issue we will take up in Chapter 5.

3.2. THE BSP AND NON-CHAMAR BAHUJANS

In this section, we briefly discuss the BSP's relationship with yet another subaltern constituency, ie. non-Chamar *bahujans*. Unlike Chamars, non-Chamar *bahujans* have not been called upon by the party to sacrifice coethnic representation and patronage benefits in the post-1996 phase. Lower backwards from both Hindu and Muslim communities have continued to be granted tickets, with Sainis, Kashyaps and Gadariyas among Hindus, and Qureishis and Ansaris among Muslims, being singled out in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts. (See tables 4.14 and 4.15.) Thus, 2 of the 5 nominations handed to *bahujans* in state assembly constituencies in Meerut, in 1996 and after, have gone to Sainis. Sainis have also received 2 of the 11 tickets awarded to *bahujans* in Muzaffarnagar during this period, with Kashyaps and Gadariyas receiving 2 tickets each as well. Backward Muslims have also received a fair number of nominations, with their proportion of tickets being higher in Meerut than in Muzaffarnagar, on account of demographic factors. Thus, 3 of the 5 tickets awarded to *bahujan* candidates in Meerut, in 1996 and after, have gone to Muslims, the corresponding figure for Muzaffarnagar being 4 out of 11.

Coethnic nominations have helped channel patronage to Hindu and Muslim backwards, where candidates have emerged victorious. In this sense, the Saini MLA in Morna, who has overlooked Sainis, has constituted more of an exception than the rule. The BSP has also secured programmatic benefits for its non-Chamar subaltern constituency, drawing hitherto excluded sections within the ambit of quotas, and ensuring that they benefit from the party's drive to distribute land, and enforce possession.[57] But none of this has persuaded this constituency to deliver the BSP a

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[57] I provide the details of these programmatic efforts in Chapter 3.

committed vote. They have, instead, supported the party on a conditional basis, voting for it only when it has nominated coethnics.[58]

For non-Chamar subalterns have perceived the BSP as being biased towards SCs ; thus, Kashyaps and Prajapatis in Alipura complained that the BSP discriminated amongst the poor, privileging Chamars when backward castes like themselves remained far worse off. The AVP, of course, had a lot to do with the widespread perception of the BSP as a Chamar party ; it was hardly any coincidence that the most disgruntled sections of lower backwards tended to be residents of Ambedkar villages. But this, by itself, was not the whole story. It was less the BSP's programmes in and of themselves, than the way in which they were administered by Chamar-majority *panchayats*, that ended up portraying the BSP as a party with a parochial agenda. I have already described how such *panchayats* alienated non-Chamar SCs through their skewed disbursal of AVP benefits, meant for distribution to SCs across the spectrum. But these *panchayats* did not administer the AVP alone ; they disbursed almost all benefits made available to poorer sections through plans. Consequently, they had plenty of scope for alienating non-SC subalterns from the party also, with the affiliation of grassroots Chamar politicians to the BSP leading their actions to be construed as reflecting the party agenda at large. In Alipura, thus, Kashyaps and Prajapatis rarely admitted to have benefitted in symbolic terms from BSP rule ; for them, the psychological gains delivered did not make up for the shortfall in the material realm, where the BSP was seen as always having favoured the Chamar caste.[59] As one Kashyap resident put it, the BSP could not expect them to vote for it, when it threw them crumbs, after having handed over the main feast to Chamars.[60]

The BSP's protection of secularism has comprised an important facet of its effort to court Muslims, who constitute a significant proportion of the non-Chamar subaltern constituency in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts. While the BSP's alliances with the BJP have hurt its credibility amongst this constituency, the party has tried to contain the fallout by resisting the BJP's efforts to generate a Hindutva-

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[58] This conclusion rests on data gathered through interviews with non-Chamar subaltern voters in my fieldwork villages.
[59] Interviews with Kashyap and Prajapati respondents in Alipura.
[60] Interview, December 20, 2003, Alipura.

based mobilization in the state. Thus, the BSP has insisted on abiding by the Supreme Court's ruling on the Ayodhya issue,[61] despite the BJP's worries that this stance would alienate its upper caste base. Mayawati has also thwarted the efforts of the VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad – World Hindu Council) to organize a religious function in Mathura, widely understood to be the Hindu god Krishna's birthplace. For Mathura also has a mosque, with the VHP's intention, as such, being to do a repeat of Ayodhya on the site, ie. mobilize Hindus, and "reconquer" the Muslim space.[62] That there have been few riots in Uttar Pradesh during BSP rule testifies to the BSP's success in preserving the secular fabric of the state ; the SP government's term (2003-2007) has, in contrast, been marked by the frequent outbreak of Hindu-Muslim violence.[63]

But the policy plank of secularism has·failed to yield the expected benefits, mainly on account of the communal politics of Chamars at the grassroots, which has been especially marked in Morna. Its proximity to Shukratal, a Hindu pilgrimage site, has made Morna especially vulnerable to communal mobilization, with Chamars, not to mention upper castes, frequently baiting, and rioting against Muslims, on small pretexts.

To sum up, the BSP has sought to provide coethnic representation, patronage as well as programmatic benefits to non-Chamar subalterns. In this sense, this constituency has been more privileged than Chamars, who have had to sacrifice the first two categories of gains in the post-1996 phase. But the BSP has failed to persuade its non-Chamar *bahujan* constituency to deliver it a committed vote, mainly because it has been perceived by this constituency as being biased towards its Chamar base. This perception has often had less to do with the BSP's actual policies, than the manner of their implementation, and sometimes, their outright subversion, by Chamars at the grassroots. Seeing the BSP as a party that has done little for them in programmatic terms, non-Chamar subalterns have chosen to support the party for

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[61] The Ayodhya issue refers to the demolition of the Babri Mosque by Hindu fundamentalist forces in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, on December 6, 1992. The Hindu right claimed that the mosque stood on the birthplace of the Hindu God Ram, which ought to be a site of Hindu worship alone. The Supreme Court ruled in 1994 that no religious activities could be held on the disputed site, or in undisputed areas in the temple town of Ayodhya, until another court decides whether the site of the razed mosque should go to the Hindu or the Muslim community.

[62] Jaffrelot, *India's Silent Revolution*, 416, n. 66.

[63] Venkitesh Ramakrishnan, "BJP raises the Stakes in Uttar Pradesh," *Hindu*, December 20, 2005.

patronage-related reasons alone. Thus, they have voted for the BSP only when it has nominated coethnics, in the understanding that legislators would direct resources, first and foremost, to their "own."

3.3. THE BSP AND NON-BAHUJAN CONSTITUENCIES

We now turn to discuss the BSP's ties to non-*bahujans*. In Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts, and in Western Uttar Pradesh, more generally, the BSP's non-*bahujan* constituency comprises mainly Jats and Gujjars. These landowning castes have been adversely affected by the BSP's policy initiatives, particularly those pertaining to land, and the implementation of the SC/ST Act. The BSP's drive to distribute *gaon sabha* land, and enforce possession of plots, has led the party to crack down on illegal occupation and cultivation, crimes committed most often by these communities. Mayawati's implementation of the SC/ST Act, on the other hand, has enhanced the bargaining capacity of SC agricultural labour, which has altered the material balance of power in the countryside. The Act has, admittedly, had more of an emancipatory impact in the East, where more of the SC poor work on the land, but in the West too, in villages where older SC populations have found it difficult to adopt to non-agricultural employment, the Act has secured both dignity and material gains for SC labour. Jat and Gujjars have, at any event, been "careful to maintain a safe distance between themselves and Chamars when Mayawati was in power," since these were, as they put it, "dangerous times." [64]

The BSP has, furthermore, not granted Jats and Gujjars any policy benefits to compensate for these costs. The question therefore arises : why have these communities voted for the BSP at all? The answer points to the reorganization of the party system that has occurred in Uttar Pradesh in the 1990s, and the subsequent disappearance of the Congress as a viable electoral alternative. Gujjars had formed a pillar of the Congress's traditional support base, mainly on account of the prominence accorded to Gujjar leader Rajesh Pilot by the Congress governments of Rajiv Gandhi, and P.V. Narasimha Rao, in both of which Pilot had served as

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[64] Interviews with a Jat respondent, January 16, 2004, Alipura.

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Minister.[65] But the Congress's marginalization, following the emergence of an ethnic party system in the early 1990s, left Gujjars in the state without a political platform. In the new scenario, both the SP and the BSP took to courting the floating Gujjar vote, which split between these two parties. Gujjars took to supporting the SP on programmatic grounds, ie. for its pro-farmer policies, while they voted for the BSP for reasons of patronage, supporting the party when it nominated coethnics, but not otherwise.

While the BSP has nominated Jats as well, this constituency has been less prone to support the party, relative to Gujjars. This is because Jats have not suffered a representation crisis, and have, consequently, not needed a new political forum.[66] Having broken with the Congress as far back as in the 1960s, Jats have allied themselves first, with Charan Singh's BLD, and then, the RLD (Rashtriya Lok Dal), led by his son Ajit Singh.

But Jats, no less than Gujjars, have responded to the BSP's efforts to strike a bargain with them at the level of the *panchayat*. For the BSP's ties to non-*bahujans* have had a two-tiered character, involving elections, not only to state legislatures, but also to village assemblies. At one level, Jats and Gujjars have voted for coethnic candidates nominated by the BSP in state assembly elections, receiving representation and patronage benefits in return. At another level, Chamars have voted for Jat and Gujjars contesting *panchayat* elections, thereby enhancing their own power in OBC-dominant villages,[67] and securing the free exercise of the SC franchise. In those villages in Western Uttar Pradesh where SCs (mostly non-Chamars) remain dependent on agricultural labour, they are frequently prevented from casting their votes by landed castes. Here, the role played by BSP cadres has proved crucial to the liberation of the SC franchise. Cadres have used the BSP's captive Chamar vote to strike a deal with Jat, or Gujjar, aspirants to the post of *pradhan*, the understanding being that Chamars would support a candidate in the *panchayat* elections, provided he or she would, upon victory, allow SCs full voting

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[65] Most Gujjar respondents cited the importance accorded to Pilot by the Congress, and by the Gandhis in particular, as their reason for supporting that party.

[66] Interviews with Jat respondents in Alipura, Rampuri, Mansurpur, and Ala Heri.

[67] The 73rd Amendment provided for OBC reservations in *panchayats*, in those village where they constituted a majority. Jats and Gujjars being the most powerful OBC communities in the West, OBC-dominant villages in the region usually saw Jats and Gujjars running for the post of *pradhan*.

freedom in parliamentary and state assembly polls. It is on account of the divisions within OBCs themselves that the Chamar vote has proved so important in OBC-majority villages ; with the OBC vote often splitting evenly amongst numerous OBC candidates, a consolidated Chamar vote has often turned out to be the factor deciding elections.[68]

This grassroots accommodation between Jats and Gujjars, on the one hand, and Chamars, on the other, first took place after the Chamar vote coalesced behind the BSP in the mid-1990s, at around the same time that Jats and Gujjars took to supporting coethnic candidates nominated by the party in state assembly polls. A BAMCEF official in Muzaffarnagar, arguing that the accommodation in panchayats had proved far more valuable than the accommodation in legislatures, had the following point to make :

When we have a Jat contesting [state assembly, or parliamentary] elections, our people benefit because the candidate ensures that they are able to cast their votes *for him, in that particular election*. A Jat running on a BSP ticket usually has the resources necessary to ensure this ... the party would not otherwise give him a ticket. But the situation is different when our workers strike bargains at the *panchayat* level. Here, the Jat who becomes *pradhan* with our support ensures that our people are able to cast their votes *in all [state assembly and parliamentary] elections, irrespective of who the candidate is*. The freedom that we win here is important. It is not a freedom we win for one election ; it lasts throughout the *pradhan's* term in office. Also, *it helps people get used to the idea of being free*. Freedom is a habit. Our people have not been able to cast their votes in these parts for a long time. So it is very important that they taste freedom, enjoy it, get used to it. Then, if a day comes when someone takes it from them, they will fight for it themselves. It is the *panchayat* level bargains that have allowed our people to enjoy freedom on a prolonged basis. The nomination of a Jat candidate, in contrast, only allows them to exercise their rights once, when they are voting him, personally. This does not help the habit of freedom to take root.[69]

Apart from ensuring a fair exercise of voting rights, ground-level accommodations have also served the purpose of enhancing SC bargaining power in OBC-dominant villages. This was indeed the purpose with which BSP cadres struck bargains with Jats in Rampuri and Patewa ; SC disengagement from agriculture, and the severance of ties with landed castes, had already sufficed to secure SC voting rights in both of these villages. As the BSP cadre who crafted the accommodation in Patewa put it :

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[68] Interviews with BSP cadres in Mawana, Dalki, Rampuri and Patewa.
[69] Interview, March 7, 2004, Muzaffarnagar (emphasis added).

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Even Jats have some shame, you know. In this village, at least, they have kept their promise. There were three Jat candidates running for the post of *pradhan*. The Jat vote was split in three. The votes of the other castes were also divided amongst the three candidates. It was the Chamar vote that decided the result. So the *pradhan* has reason to be grateful to us. We have had no problems casting our vote in this village for many years now. But after this, the *pradhan* talks to me before making important decisions. So, even though I am not a member of the *panchayat*, I have some say in village affairs. Chamars are treated well in this village.[70]

The readiness with which landed castes have approached Chamars for help in winning *panchayat* elections, however, makes Western Uttar Pradesh different from the east. In the East, it is not backwards (Jats and Gujjars), but upper castes (Brahmins and Thakurs), who form the landed strata. This, together with the greater rigidity of the caste system here, has ruled out any collaboration between Chamars and landed communities at the grassroots. As such, it is not through bargains, but by force, that Brahmins and Thakurs have eased obstacles to their victory in *panchayat* elections in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. By the same token, the route to liberating the SC franchise has been rougher, and more violent, here. While the collaboration at the legislative level has been smooth (with upper castes supporting coethnic candidates nominated by the BSP, and upper caste candidates ensuring that SCs get to cast their votes), it has remained unsupported by informal understandings at the village level. As such, the gap between the BSP's multiethnic legislative face, and the ethnic antagonisms marking politics below, has been especially wide in the East, relative to the West.[71]

3.4. THE BSP AND THE ASYMMETRIC REPRESENTATION OF CONSTITUENCIES

To sum up, then, the BSP's contracts with its various constituencies have clearly been different. The BSP has delivered policy benefits to Chamars, offered representation and patronage to non-*bahujans*, and secured all three categories of gains for non-Chamar *bahujan* castes. These constituencies have, for their part, also treated the party differently. Chamars alone have delivered the BSP a committed vote in both East and West. Non-*bahujans* have supported the party only when it has nominated coethnics, and whereas non-Chamar *bahujans* have voted like non-*bahujans*

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[70] Interview, February 23, 2004, Patewa.
[71] I discuss this point in greater detail in Chapter 5.

in the West, they have voted more like Chamars in the East. The BSP's asymmetric representation of its constituencies, and the different voting patterns adopted by the latter vis-à-vis the party, all testify to the unevenness of the ties binding the party to its base.

The thesis of asymmetric representation is borne out still further if we consider the BSP's use of its non-*bahujan* constituency to empower *bahujans*. The whole purpose behind non-*bahujan* nominations has been to win more seats, so as to be able to capture power, the point of capturing power, again, being to empower more and more subalterns, programmatically speaking. The BSP has seen the empowerment of subalterns as an instrument for enlarging its *bahujan* base, and for persuading still uncommitted *bahujan* voters, to deliver the party a committed vote. Power, in this sense, has been understood by the party as a means for realizing its founding mission, and forging the *bahujan samaj*. And non-*bahujans* have fit this scheme as a tool for the building of *bahujan* power, slowly and incrementally, over time.

This cumulative understanding of *bahujan* power, as something that could grow in future provided the BSP used its present time in government well, was best articulated by a BAMCEF official I interviewed in Lucknow.

We have to remind our people, at regular intervals, that the BSP can make a difference to their lives in ways other parties cannot. This is why we need to form the government frequently. This helps to keep our people loyal to us during the time we are not in power. If a long time lapses since the BSP was last in power, then people's memories fade, and it is difficult for us to mobilize, and come to power again. Memories are a crucial factor that help us win elections…. But memories also create pressure on us to deliver when we are ruling. Good memories of past BSP rule create expectations about future BSP governments. This is the reason Behenji has always been in a rush to implement her policies immediately after becoming CM [Chief Minister]. Our upper caste MLAs have a habit of defecting…they are in the BSP for their own gain, they do not share our ideology. But we are no fools either. We know they will defect, so we deliver as soon as we come to power, while we still have the numbers. And this policy has paid off…. Power is not something static, it grows over time. We began with a small amount of power, but we used this power intelligently, to get more power later. It is in order to grow in power that the BSP has adopted any method available to form the government ; this has meant allying with the BJP, and later, nominating upper castes.[72]

Upper castes, as such, have had no value in and of themselves ; they have merely been an aid that the party has used to pursue its goal of *bahujan* unity. In so

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[72] Interview, Lucknow, July 2, 2004.

far as the BSP has used one of its constituencies to unite the two others, and has viewed this unified entity as representing its "real" base, it has not only treated its constituencies differently, but discriminated between them as well.

Before ending, I focus briefly on the role Chamars have played in the BSP's efforts to forge a wider *bahujan* base. It is because Chamars have agreed to support non-*bahujan* candidates, and bear the costs of non-*bahujan* nominations, that the BSP has been able to distribute tickets to non-*bahujan* castes, and work towards empowering and uniting the *bahujan samaj*. In Western Uttar Pradesh, however, Chamars have borne the costs of multiethnic transformation out of a concern, not for *bahujan* unity, but for their own future empowerment. In the East, the Chamar ethos has been more in sync with the leadership's own ; here, it is the goal of *bahujan* solidarity that has driven Chamar willingness to put up with the necessary burdens.[73]

4. The BSP, and the Problem of Embeddedness

Chamars are the most numerous SC community in Uttar Pradesh, and the one spread across the largest number of villages. Chamar ubiquitousness, coupled with their close ties to the BSP, has allowed the party to penetrate the Uttar Pradesh countryside like no other. Neither the SP, nor the BJP, boasts this depth of organizational reach ; the Congress fares even worse than the SP and BJP when compared to the BSP – it frequently has no party unit functioning at the level of the district, not to mention the village. The BSP's reach, to be sure, has proved helpful to the party ; it is owing to the vigilance of Chamar cadres, based in villages throughout the state, that the party has succeeded in securing the free exercise of the SC franchise. But it is not always that Chamar cadres have worked to help the BSP realize its goals. The main obstacles hindering the BSP's efforts to forge a plebeian electoral coalition have been posed by the Chamar rank and file itself. In what follows, I draw on fieldwork observations and interviews to show how the BSP has been held hostage, in a sense, by its Chamar base in Western Uttar Pradesh, and how Chamars have made it difficult for the party to widen its subaltern base in this part of the state.

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[73] I develop this argument fully in Chapter 5.

I have already discussed how Chamars have discriminated against other SCs in the distribution of AVP benefits ; Chamars in Hastinapur have also resisted the nomination of Balmiki candidates, which would have made it easier for the BSP to win that reserved seat. It is, furthermore, not merely non-Chamar SCs who have been alienated by Chamars ; in Morna, the BSP's Chamar base has undercut the party's efforts to win over Muslims and lower backwards as well.

An analysis of the last *panchayat* elections held in Dalki helps illuminate the tensions underlying Chamar - lower backward relations in Morna. There were three candidates running for the post of *pradhan* – a Gujjar, a Thakur, and a Gadariya. The Gadariya candidate, it needs to be noted, was an old BSP hand, who had been working hard to win lower backwards over to the party, not only in Dalki, but in the constituency as a whole. It, therefore, came as a shock to him, and his Gadariya supporters in the village, when Chamars in Dalki threw their weight behind the Gujjar candidate. It made matters worse that the Chamar vote turned out to be of such crucial importance that year. With Gujjars having united behind their candidate, Thakurs, Balmikis and Muslims behind the Thakur candidate, and lower backwards, ie. Gadariyas, Sainis and Kashyaps, behind the Gadariya candidate, all three candidates had roughly equal support in the village. Chamars made up their mind last, thus casting the deciding vote ; it was, thus, in large measure owing to Chamar support that the Gujjar candidate emerged victorious.[74]

Chamars in Dalki had made the shift to the non-agrarian sector, and cut their ties of dependence on landowning castes ; their decision, as such, was not dictated by compulsions of any sort. This, together, with the fact that the Gadariya candidate's victory would have helped tilt the balance of power in favour of *bahujans*, and the BSP, within the village, made the Chamar decision baffling, and difficult to fathom. But as my interviews revealed, it did, however, have an underlying rationale, namely, Chamar resentment at having being overlooked, and sometimes ill-treated, by the lower backward MLA in Morna. Chamars in Dalki were, in other words, paying back lower backwards for the costs that RajPal Saini's election had imposed on them. It did not count that the Gadariya candidate concerned had been a loyal BSP cadre,

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[74] Interviews with Gadariya respondents in Dalki.

who had worked tirelessly over the years to get his coethnics to deliver the BSP a committed vote.[75] As the Gadariya candidate put it himself,

Chamars are not the only ones who have suffered. All of us lower backwards who voted for him [ie.RajPal Saini] feel cheated. So why did they take out their anger on me? I have found it difficult to face my own community after the [*panchayat*] elections. They ask me, 'What happened to your Chamar friends? Where did they go when you needed them?' It is embarrassing. I have been working to get my caste brothers to vote for the party [ie.BSP]. But if the party does not support me, how can I persuade them to vote for it it? It does not matter that I lost the elections. But what about the political work I have done? I have lost face amongst Gadariyas ; how will I go to them now, and ask them to support the BSP again?[76]

Cadres like this are especially valuable in Western Uttar Pradesh, where it is rare for lower backwards to commit to the BSP for reasons other than patronage. Given the work they do amongst their coethnics, the alienation of such cadres has costs for the BSP, impacting the party electorally, in the short term, as well as damaging its long term project of subaltern unity.

We now discuss the alienation of Muslims by the BSP's Chamar base. I have mentioned earlier that Morna was a communal constituency ; a BJP politician, arguing that "this was the first time the BSP had won the seat," went so far as to characterize it as "the BJP's own." [77] The last communal incident in Morna constituency had occurred in Morna, the village from which the constituency took its name ; widely referred to as the "cemetery episode," it unfolded in the following way. There was a large square plot of land near the Morna marketplace, bordering a Chamar neighbourhood, that Muslims had used for many years now for burying their dead. Hindus had, however, been using the cemetery for defecating, and dumping rubbish, which prompted the Muslim decision to build a boundary wall. Sanjay Singh, who was the SP MLA at the time, agreed to release money from his constituency fund to finance the project, following which the task of construction began. The BJP, in the meantime, mobilized an opposition, arguing that the plot concerned was public land, and that Muslims had no business fencing it off. This opposition, headed by BJP politicians, and made up of Brahmins, Baniyas, Sainis,

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[75] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Dalki.
[76] Interview, March 21, 2004, Dalki.
[77] Interview with Dr. Nirbal, the BJP candidate from Morna in the 2002 state assembly elections, March 4, 2004, Bhopa.

Gadariyas, Chamars, and Balmikis, got a stay order issued, which required that the construction of the boundary wall be suspended, pending the resolution of the dispute by a court.

In the atmosphere of communal tension that ensued, a scuffle between Hindus and Muslims escalated into a full-scale riot, in which both Hindus and Muslims were injured, and a Muslim boy was shot and killed. Following Sanjay Singh's arrival, and intervention on behalf of Muslims, the police rounded up the rioters, the vast majority of whom were Hindus, with Chamars figuring heavily amongst their ranks.[78]

Two different interpretations emerged when I talked to people in the BSP about the incident in Morna. District and constituency-level officials argued that the BJP had engineered the whole episode, and as was typical of the BJP's brand of politics, there had been a conspicuous absence of upper castes amongst the rioters. The BJP had, in other words, got SCs and lower backwards to attack Muslims, do the dirty work, and take the heat.[79] But Chamar cadres on the ground in Morna had a different perspective. They argued that they had rioted out of their own free will ; neither the BJP, nor anyone else, had persuaded them to go on a rampage. And it was true that the majority of rioters had been Chamars ; "when it comes to the real action, those upper castes are cowards – they are scared to come out and face the violence." Their partaking in riots, furthermore, did not mean they had crossed over to the BJP ; the BJP was an upper caste party, whereas "Behenji, on the other hand, had done a lot for Chamars." [80]

Thus, Chamars, while unambiguously identifying themselves as BSP cadres, professed openly communal attitudes that were distinctly at odds with the BSP's secular ideology. This was the case, not merely in Morna village, but in sites all over the constituency at large. Thus, my Chamar respondents in Bhopa complained that MLAs and MPs from the Congress and SP had "fallen over each other to appease Muslims in the area," and to "build boundary walls around so-called cemeteries, that lay on land belonging to the government." [81] A Chamar cadre in Patewa, argued in a

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[78] Interviews with Chamar, Balmiki, Baniya and Muslim respondents in Morna.
[79] Interviews with BSP officials, Morna assembly constituency and Muzaffarnagar district units.
[80] Interviews with Chamar cadres in Morna.
[81] Interview, March 12, 2004, Bhopa.

similar vein that while "there was no dearth of politicians who wanted to fence cemeteries, and build mosques," "you will not find anyone willing to build a temple in Shukratal." [82]

The question may arise as to why Chamar cadres have nurtured parochial notions of subaltern community, that have been at odds with the broad visions of the leadership. The immediate answer would point to the sharp socio-economic differentiation that has arisen between Chamars and non-Chamar subalterns in the West, largely on account of the greater educational attainment of the former, and consequently, their more efficient use of quotas. Their own socio-economic mobility has encouraged Chamars to see themselves as constituting the most deserving subaltern community, and the BSP's natural and legitimate constituency. In Eastern Uttar Pradesh, in contrast, Chamar labour has remained largely illiterate, failing thereby to take advantage of reservations ; this has made for a relative lack of socio-economic differentiation between this constituency and other plebeian groups, which has facilitated a shared plebeian identity.

The causation, moreover, does not stop here. While I do not dwell on these processes at length, it has to be recognized that Chamar educational achievement has been made possible both by the historical trajectory of economic development in Western Uttar Pradesh, as well as its pattern of lower caste politics. The faster pace of industrialization in the West has helped Chamars shift to the urban sector, and earn the resources necessary to send their children to school. The status improvement movements of the 1920s and 1930s, and the movement for reservations in the 1940s have, on the other hand, made for an emphasis on upward mobility, and quotas. Success in the realm of quotas has obviously depended on educational achievement ; the focus on reservations have, as such, motivated Chamars to educate themselves.

This is in contrast to the East, where sluggish economic development has allowed few opportunities to subalterns to move out of agriculture, and where a tradition of left struggle has left behind a legacy of mobilization around issues of economic justice, and land. This left tradition has also involved joint action by SCs

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[82] Interview, February 26, 2004, Patewa.

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and lower backwards, as opposed to movements in the West, which have been hierarchically organized, with Chamars occupying leadership positions.[83] It is hardly surprising then, given these historical circumstances, that it is in the East that the more inclusive and egalitarian understandings of plebeian identity have taken root.

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[83] Sudha Pai, *Dalit Assertion and the Unfinished Democratic Revolution : The Bahujan Samaj Party in North India* (New Delhi : Sage, 2002), Chapter 1.

5

The Politics of Equality and Subaltern Solidarity : The Bahujan Samaj Party in Eastern Uttar Pradesh

This chapter presents the empirical findings from Eastern Uttar Pradesh.[1] The Chamar poor deliver the BSP a trust-based, future-oriented vote here, just as they do in the West. But the dynamics grounding trust, and the expectations nurtured of the BSP, remain quite different in the two regions. The East also offers a divergent perspective on the problem of *bahujan* unity, and Chamar "embeddedness." Chamars have formed the BSP's core constituency across Uttar Pradesh. But the Chamar understanding of subaltern community, and the nature of their engagement with non-*bahujans*, has varied widely across the state. The BSP's efforts to broaden its *bahujan* base have, consequently, met with different results in the East and West, with the party's subaltern coalition taking on different contours in the two regions.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section lays out the rationale guiding the choice of fieldsites in the East. The second section draws on interviews with Chamar voters, and uses this data to explain why the Chamar poor in the East vote for the BSP. It argues that the logic underlying this electoral support is similar in some ways, but dissimilar in others, to the logic underpinning the Chamar poor's support for the party in the West. The third section draws on interviews with voters from all castes resident in the fieldwork villages, and with BSP cadres, and throws light on the different contracts struck by the party with its various caste constituencies. It demonstrates that while the BSP has resorted to asymmetric representation in the West, asymmetric representation has taken on slightly different dimensions in the East. Finally, the fourth section explores the impact of the BSP's ties to its Chamar base, and argues that these ties have had very different

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[1] Fieldwork was conducted in Eastern Uttar Pradesh over the period April - August 2004 (April-June 2004 in Jaunpur, and June-August 2004 in Azamgarh).

consequences in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. They have not hindered the forging of *bahujan* unity here ; Chamars have instead engaged with other *bahujans*, and shared the benefits of BSP rule, in this region.

1. Justifying the Choice of Fieldsites

Eastern Uttar Pradesh is much less urbanized and industrialized than the Western part of the state. Consequently, SC agricultural labour have had fewer opportunities to move out of the agrarian sector here. The SC poor in the East also hold less land, which perpetuates their economic dependence on landowning castes. Their continuing ties to the agrarian economy, and material subordination within it, furthermore, sets in motion a cycle of economic backwardness, and low educational achievement. The failure to shift to towns, and industrial occupations, leads to poor awareness of the value of education, with the resulting educational lag only serving to perpetuate poverty, and agrarian dependence.

Fieldwork Districts

Jaunpur and Azamgarh, my two fieldwork districts, typify these features of the East well. The SC poor in both districts remain overwhelmingly engaged in agricultural labour. Literacy levels amongst SC labour also remain very low here, with school enrolment hardly seeing the rise that it has in the West. The SC poor in these districts, consequently, rarely prevail in the competition over quotas, or see reservations as providing the route to upward economic mobility. Their material priorities, in other words, diverge from those prevailing among SCs in the West. In the West, where the Chamar poor have severed their ties to the land, and invested in education, these priorities revolve around quotas, and public sector jobs. In the East, where Chamars remain locked with landed upper castes in relations of material dependence, these revolve around land instead.

Jaunpur and Azamgarh are also representative of the caste make-up of Eastern Uttar Pradesh, and of the caste antagonisms that mark politics in this region. In the West, it is SC-OBC relations that form the core of caste politics. OBC communities, predominantly, Jats and Gujjars, constitute the landowning class here, with SC empowerment consisting in SC labour's severing relations with these castes.

In the East, in contrast, it is upper castes, both Hindu and Muslim, who own land. While some OBCs (predominantly Yadavs and Kurmis) also form part of the landowning class, they own mostly small and medium holdings, and do not employ SC farm labour to the same extent as upper caste farmers. Caste contradictions in the East, therefore, pit the upper caste landed against landless SC labour. While we have SCs resisting Hindu upper castes, ie. Brahmins and Thakurs, in Jaunpur, we have them resisting Muslim upper castes, ie. Pathans, Sheikhs and Sayyads, in Azamgarh. These fieldsites also throw light on the contracts that these non-*bahujan* communities have struck with the BSP, and enable a comparison of the BSP's accommodation of upper castes in the East with its accommodation of OBCs in the West.

Table 5.1 : Caste Profile of Jaunpur and Azamgarh Districts (castes listed in descending order of numerical strength)

Jaunpur District	Azamgarh District
1. Chamars (SC)	1. Muslims
2. Brahmins (Upper Caste)	2. Chamars (SC)
3. Thakurs (Upper Caste)	3. Yadavs (Upper Backward)
4. Yadavs (Upper Backward)	4. Rajbhars (Lower Backward)
5. Muslims	5. Thakurs (Upper Caste)
6. Kurmis (Upper Backward)	6. Brahmins (Upper Caste)
7. Mauryas (Upper Backward)	7. Kurmis (Upper Backward)
8. Rajbhars (Lower Backward)	8. Noniyas (Lower Backward)
9. Noniyas (Lower Backward)	9. Mauryas (Upper Backward)
10. Baniyas (Upper Caste)	10. Baniyas (Upper Caste)
11. Nishads (Lower Backward)	11. Pasis (SC)
12. Musahars (SC)	12. Khatiks (SC)
13. Pasis (SC)	13. Nishads (Lower Backward)
14. Khatiks (SC)	14. Bhoomihars (Upper Caste)
15. Nais (Lower Backward)	15. Kayasths (Upper Caste)
16. Dhobis (SC)	16. Musahars (SC)
17. Bhoomihars (Upper Caste)	17. Prajapatis (Lower Backward)
18. Kayasths (Upper Caste)	18. Kashyaps (Lower Backward)
19. Kashyaps (Lower Backward)	19. Vishwakarmas (Lower Backward)
20. Prajapatis (Lower Backward)	
21. Vishwakarmas (Lower Backward)	
22. Sonars (Lower Backward)	

Source : BSP, Jaunpur and Azamgarh District Units.
Note : While there are caste divisions within Muslims, data pertaining to these divisions was not available. BSP officials, however, indicated that there were a larger number of high caste Muslims in Azamgarh than in Jaunpur.

Fieldwork Constituencies

We now discuss the choice of Jaunpur and Saraimir, the 2 state assembly constituencies selected for fieldwork in Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts respectively.

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Jaunpur and Saraimir provide a contrast between a reserved and a non-reserved seat, Saraimir being reserved for SCs. Of the 10 state assembly constituencies in Jaunpur district (Rari, Barsathi, Mariahu, Shahganj, Jaunpur, Gadwara, Khutahan, Macchlishahr, Kerakat and Bayalsi [2]), and the 11 in Azamgarh district (Phulpur, Saraimir, Atraulia, Gopalpur, Azamgarh, Lalganj, Mehnagar, Nizamabad, Mubarakpur, Mohamedebad-Gohna, and Sagri [3]), only 5 are reserved : Shahganj and Kerakat in Jaunpur, and Saraimir, Mehnagar, and Mohamedabad-Gohna in Azamgarh. Of these 5, only Saraimir and Mehnagar had sitting BSP MLAs at the time of fieldwork. Having a BSP MLA incumbent in the reserved seat was important, since it allowed for a comparison of the costs imposed by the BSP's SC legislators on SC voters, with those imposed by its non-SC MLAs. (Hastinapur, the reserved seat under study in Western Uttar Pradesh, we may recall, had never had a BSP MLA in the period running up to 2003-2004, when I conducted fieldwork.) Saraimir, as a choice, moreover, trumped Mehnagar, in that electoral support for the BSP had come earlier, and been more persistent, here. The BSP had won the Mehnagar seat for the first time in the 2002 state assembly elections ; its first win in Saraimir, in contrast, had come in 1989, with the party winning the seat in the 1993, 1996 and 2002 state assembly elections as well. This was significant, in that it offered a contrast with Hastinapur, where victory had eluded the BSP during the period under study.

I now discuss the choice of Jaunpur assembly constituency. The BSP had nominated upper castes in five non-reserved constituencies in Jaunpur district in 2002 : Bayalsi, Macchlishahr, Gadwara, Jaunpur and Barsathi. Of these, the BSP had won only the Bayalsi and Macchlishahr seats ; Jaunpur, as such, did not have a sitting BSP MLA at the time of fieldwork. But Jaunpur had several advantages over the other two constituencies ; it was the only constituency in which the BSP had nominated a Brahmin in 2002, thereby presaging the trend of Brahmin nominations that was to be the hallmark of the 2007 state assembly elections. Jaunpur assembly

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[2] Of these 10 state assembly constituencies, only the first 5 make up Jaunpur parliamentary constituency. Gadwara, Khutahan, and Macchlishahr constitute part of Macchlishahr parliamentary constituency, while Kerakat and Bayalsi constitute part of Saidpur parliamentary constituency.
[3] Of these 11 state assembly constituencies, the first 5 make up Azamgarh parliamentary constituency, and the next 5 Lalganj parliamentary constituency. Sagri, on the other had, constitutes part of Ghosi parliamentary constituency. Again, Nizamabad and Mohamedabad - Gohna constituencies lie jointly in Azamgarh and Mau districts.

constituency was also part of Jaunpur parliamentary constituency, where the BSP had nominated a Brahmin in the 2004 parliamentary elections. As I conducted fieldwork in Jaunpur in the period immediately preceding the 2004 polls, this enabled a still closer look at the dynamics of Brahmin nominations. Thakurs, again, were a prominent presence in the BSP organization in Jaunpur, which allowed me to study how this presence impacted SC farm labour, the vast majority of whom worked for Thakur farmers.

Table 5.2 : Caste-wise Distribution of Votes in Jaunpur and Saraimir Assembly Constituencies

Jaunpur Assembly Constituency		Saraimir Assembly Constituency	
Caste	**Votes**	**Caste**	**Votes**
1. Thakurs (Upper Caste)	40,000	1. Chamars (SC)	110,000
2. Brahmins (Upper Caste)	37,000	2. Muslims	90,000
3. Muslims	35,000	3. Yadavs (Upper Backward)	30,000
4. Yadavs (Upper Backward)	35,000	4. Rajbhars (Lower Backward)	12,000
5. Chamars (SC)	32,000	5. Baniyas (Upper Caste)	8,000
6. Baniyas (Upper Caste)	25,000	6. Thakurs (Upper Caste)	5,000
7. Mauryas (Upper Backward)	15,000	7. Pasis (SC)	4,000
8. Nishads (Lower Backward)	15,000	8. Khatiks (SC)	4,000
9. Kurmis (Upper Backward)	8,000	9. Mauryas (Upper Backward)	2,000
10. Khatiks (SC)	8,000	10. Noniyas (Lower Backward)	2,000
11. Noniyas (Lower Backward)	5,000	11. Musahars (SC)	800
12. Bhoomihars (Upper Caste)	5,000	12. Prajapatis (Lower Backward)	500
13. Nais (Lower Backward)	5,000	*Total*	*268,300*
14. Kasyhaps (Lower Backward)	5,000		
15. Dhobis (SC)	3,500		
16. Vishwakarmas (Lower Backward)	2,000		
17. Pasis (SC)	2,000		
18. Musahars (SC)	2,000		
19. Prajapatis (Lower Backward)	1,000		
20. Sonars (Lower Backward)	400		
Total	*280900*		

Source : BSP, Assembly Constituency Units, Jaunpur and Saraimir.
Note : The figures presented here are approximate ones. The total, in both cases, exceeds the figure projected by the Election Commission for the 2002 state assembly elections (255,619 for Jaunpur, and 250,291 for Saraimir), while falling below the figure projected for the 2007 state assembly elections (297,308 for Jaunpur, and 302,348 for Saraimir). I obtained these figures in 2004, in the interval between the two elections.

Fieldwork Villages

I now analyse the selection of my fieldwork villages. So far as voter interviews went, the main village chosen in Jaunpur was Dehri, and in Saraimir, Baraipar. The three subsidiary villages in Jaunpur, which I visited to verify findings generated in the main village, were Dumri, Bashi, and Dadra. Their counterparts in

Saraimir were Sakatpur, Thara and Malari.[4] Interviews with cadres/officials of the BSP and other parties were conducted over a wider range of settings : aside from the sites mentioned above, the villages of Jagdish Patti, Mahroopur, Ramnagar Bharsara, Jamaitha and Barbaspur, and the town of Jafarabad in Jaunpur assembly constituency ; and the villages of Karauli Khurd, Karauli Buzurg, Pedra Gangapur, Kharewan, Tikariya Madhu Khan, Ohadpur and Achalpur, and the town of Saraimir, in Saraimir assembly constituency. The BSP had divided each assembly constituency into 20 sectors for organizational purposes ; the sites mentioned above were drawn from 5 of these 20 sectors, for each constituency. Interviews were also conducted with BSP and BAMCEF officials active at the level of the constituency, and district. The SP, BJP and Congress did not have a significant grassroots presence ; the sample for these parties thus included cadres operative within constituency-level, and district-level, committees. CPI and CPI(M) cadres, who were present in some of the villages mentioned above, were interviewed as well.

Table 5.3 : Caste-wise Distribution of Votes in Dehri and Baraipar Villages

Dehri		Baraipar	
Caste	Votes	Caste	Votes
1. Chamars (SC)	750	1. Muslims	860
2. Thakurs (Upper Caste)	375	2. Chamars (SC)	90
3. Yadavs (Upper Backward)	350	3. Musahars (SC)	20
4. Brahmins (Upper Caste)	140	4. Prajapatis (Lower Backward)	19
5. Kurmis (Upper Backward)	132	*Total*	*989*
6. Muslims	120		
7. Mauryas (Upper Backward)	110		
8. Baniyas (Upper Caste)	93		
9. Kashyaps (Lower Backward)	81		
10. Khatiks (SC)	80		
11. Vishwakarmas (Lower Backward)	60		
12. Musahars (SC)	12		
13. Nais (Lower Backward)	10		
14. Prajapatis (lower Backward)	8		
15. Sonars (Lower Backward)	4		
Total	*2325*		

Source : Interviews with *pradhans,* Dehri and Baraipar May 12, and July 17, 2004, respectively.

The considerations guiding my choice of the main fieldwork villages were the same as in the West. First, the villages had to be representative of Eastern Uttar Pradesh in terms of caste make-up, and facilitate an understanding of the changing

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[4] The names of the main and subsidiary fieldwork villages have been changed to protect sources.

relations of domination and subordination between landed castes and *bahujans*, especially SCs. Dehri's demographic profile reflected that of Jaunpur district's, thereby enabling a focus on Hindu upper caste - subaltern interactions specifically. The village had a significant Thakur and Brahmin presence, though the largest caste group were SCs, the vast majority of them Chamars. The presence of both landed and landless OBCs also facilitated a look at the contours of BSP support amongst backwards in the East. Baraipar, on the other hand, was dominated by upper caste Muslims ; Hindus were a minority in this village, with SCs, specifically Chamars, constituting the largest Hindu community. Baraipar also had some backward Muslims, which made it possible to explore the caste character of the support extended by Muslims to the BSP.

Table 5.4 : Caste-wise Distribution of Muslim Votes in Dehri and Baraipar Villages

Dehri		Baraipar	
Caste	Votes	Caste	Votes
1. Dhobis (Lower Backward)	60	1. Sheikhs (Upper Caste)	300
2. Ansaris (Lower Backward)	30	2. Mansooris (Lower Backward)	270
3. Mirzas (Upper Caste)	30	3. Pathans (Upper Caste)	150
Total	120	4. Ansaris (Lower Backward)	90
		5. Salmanis (Lower Backward)	30
		6. Dhobis (Lower Backward)	11
		7. Darzis (lower Backward)	9
		Total	860

Source : Interviews with *pradhans,* Dehri and Baraipar May 12, and July 17, 2004, respectively.
Note : Muslim Dhobis fall within the OBC category. Hindu Dhobis, on the other hand, are SCs.

Second, one of the two villages had to be an Ambedkar village, to facilitate a comparison of intra-SC politics in Ambedkar villages in Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh.

Third, practical considerations factored in as well – the villages had to lie within daily commuting distance of the towns of Jaunpur and Saraimir, where I had set up base. Dehri lay 5 kilometres from Jaunpur, and could be reached by jeep or rickshaw. Baraipar lay 2 kilometres from Saraimir, and could be reached by rickshaw, or foot.

2. The BSP and the Support of Chamar Labour

2.1. CHAMAR LABOUR'S SITUATION PRIOR
TO THE BSP'S CAPTURING POWER

As in Western Uttar Pradesh, their economic situation at the time the BSP came to power has shaped the consequences of BSP rule for Chamar labour in the East. Their material circumstances at this juncture were quite different from those of their counterparts in the West : they held far less land, and had been much less successful in shifting out of the agrarian sector. Their continued dependence on landed castes also prevented the Chamar poor from exercising effective power within *panchayats* following the implementation of the 73rd Amendment ; while SC reservations bolstered Chamar presence within *panchayats*, it did not allow Chamars to make independent decisions, or bypass dominant castes and channel benefits to coethnics, as they had been able to do in the West.

Table 5.5 : SC Agricultural Landholding in Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh

	Western Uttar Pradesh		Eastern Uttar Pradesh	
	% of SC Households	Average Size Of Holdings (In Hectares)	% of SC Households	Average Size Of Holdings (In Hectares)
Marginal Holdings (Below 1 Hectare)	82.87	0.37	92.17	0.28
Small Holdings (1-2 Hectares)	12.35	1.33	5.55	1.34
Semi- Medium Holdings (2-4 Hectares)	4.0	2.66	1.85	2.70
Medium Holdings (4-10 Hectares)	0.76	5.22	0.38	5.56
Large Holdings (Above 10 Hectares)	0.01	12.77	0.42	16.83
Total Holdings	100	0.62	100	0.41

Source : Agricultural Census, 1995-1996, Board of Revenue, Uttar Pradesh.
Note : This table appears in Chapter 4 as Table 4.5.

Table 5.5 presents data pertaining to the landholding situation of SCs in the mid-1990s. There was a higher proportion of SC households cultivating semi-medium holdings (2-4 hectares) and small holdings (1-2 hectares) in the West, relative to the East ; the proportion of households cultivating marginal holdings (measuring below 1 hectare), on the other hand, was higher in the East. The distribution of SC households across landholding categories was, as such, less even in

Eastern Uttar Pradesh, with the concentration in the marginal holding category being thicker here. Amongst those with the least land, ie. marginal landholders, furthermore, the average size of holdings was, again, smaller in the East.

The SC landholding situation in my fieldwork villages approximated the larger pattern in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Thakurs, Brahmins and Yadavs were the major landowning castes in Dehri ; they owned 185 acres, 90 acres, and 60 acres respectively. Of the backward castes (other than Yadavs) resident in the village, only Kurmis, Mauryas and Sonars owned land : 35, 28 and 2 acres. Chamars alone amongst SCs possessed land, with their total holding amounting to a meagre 4 acres. Amongst Muslims, Mirzas owned 7 acres, and Ansaris 10. The Chamar landholding situation in Dehri was especially significant on account of their being the largest caste group in the village ; their population was double that of Thakurs and Yadavs, and four times that of Brahmins.

The situation in Baraipar was still worse. All land in the village was owned by Muslims, with upper caste Sheikhs constituting the vast majority of landowners. Of a total 219 acres, 125 were owned by Sheikhs. The next largest landowning community were also upper caste, namely, Pathans, who owned 40 acres. Mansooris came next with 35 acres, followed by Ansaris, who owned 19. Mansooris and Ansaris were the only Muslim backwards who owned land ; the Salmanis, Dhobis and Darzis were all landless. Prajapatis, the one Hindu backward community in Baraipar, also held no land ; the same was true of Chamars and Musahars, the two resident SC groups.[5]

Low landownership levels would not have mattered so much to Chamars in Jaunpur and Azamgarh had they been able to effect a shift to the non-agricultural sector. But the opportunities for such a transition were few here. Wheat and rice, the main staples of agricultural production in the East, were subsistence crops which failed to sustain food-processing industries in the way sugarcane did in the West. The general failure of industrialization also depressed the non-agrarian labour market ; the only factories operating within a radius of 25 kilometres from Jaunpur town were a textile mill in Siddiqpur, some bottling plants in Satahariya, and cottage industries making *bidis* (handrolled cigarettes wrapped in *tendu* leaves) and *attar* (fragrant

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[5] Data pertaining to the caste-wise distribution of land in Dehri and Baraipar was obtained from the *patwaris* of the respective villages.

essential oil/perfume obtained from flowers), located in Jaunpur itself. Saraimir had even fewer industries, partly on account of an erratic electricity supply.

I have argued in Chapter 4 that it was their shifting out of the agricultural sector that allowed Chamar labour to draw the fullest possible empowerment from the 73rd Amendment in Western Uttar Pradesh. This proposition was borne out by events in the East as well. The 73rd Amendment's implementation in 1995 enhanced Chamar presence in *panchayats* in the East, just as in the West, but their material dependence on landed castes made it much more difficult for Chamars to exercise effective power. Upper castes often succeeded in getting SC *pradhans* to obey their dictates, and send a constant flow of benefits their way, often at the expense of SCs themselves. Thus, the village of Malari in Saraimir saw the Chamar *pradhan* make out *gaon sabha* plots, and channel AVP benefits to Sheikhs, the major landowning community in the village. In those cases where SC *pradhans* proved more recalcitrant, they were either murdered (the Chamar *pradhan* elected in 1995 in Anapur village, in Jaunpur constituency, met this fate), or removed from office on the basis of false allegations (the Chamar *pradhan* elected in 1995 in Dumri, also in Jaunpur, was ousted in this manner).[6]

Their reliance on landed castes, and subordination within *panchayats*, did not, however, erase all possibilities of material resistance by Chamar agricultural labour in the pre-BSP period. This was partly on account of some circumstances defining the farmer-labourer relationship in the East, and partly on account of some work-related choices made by Chamars. The most important circumstance enabling strike action was the reliance of upper caste farmers on local Chamar labour, which arose on account of the absence of migrant labour, and the relatively less frequent use of harvesting machines, in Eastern Uttar Pradesh.[7] But what enabled village labour specifically to corner the market, and agitate for raises, were the much higher wages (70-80 rupees) charged by "outside" labour, residing in neighbouring villages, or in towns ; big farmers needing to hire a large number of farm hands could not afford

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[6] Interview with the incumbent Chamar *pradhan*, Dumri, May 21, 2004. This *pradhan* was elected in 2000.

[7] Migrant labour preferred to work in the West because of the higher wages prevailing there - the daily wage rate for casual male labour was 70 rupees in the West, as opposed to 50- 60 rupees in the East. As for harvesters, the larger average size of agricultural holdings in the West made it more efficient for farmers to use them there.

these higher rates.[8] The question will also arise as to why landed castes were dependent on Chamars in particular. This was for two reasons : (1) Chamars formed the vast majority of the agricultural labour force ; and (2) they were also, by far, the best at the job. As one Brahmin farmer in Dehri put it : "they have been doing this forever, for many generations. No one can do agricultural work as efficiently, and as fast, as Chamars." [9]

Having said this, there were some important differences between Jaunpur and Saraimir constituencies when it came to circumstances facilitating strikes. Thakurs and Brahmins in my fieldwork villages in Jaunpur owned large-sized holdings ; Sheikhs and Pathans in my Saraimir sites, on the other hand, owned medium-sized plots. This made a difference in that farmers with large holdings, who needed more labour to work their land, could ill afford to hire workers from outside the village, on account of the higher wages they would charge ; the costs for them were simply too high. Farmers holding medium-sized plots were freer in this sense to employ "outside" labour ; with only four to five workers in the reckoning, they calculated they could afford the costs. This meant that labour action was less likely to succeed in villages where farmers owned smaller plots ; thus, while Chamars in Baraipar had been forced, in every instance, to break their strike, those in Dehri had not only stopped work for whole months, but also managed to raise their wages, a few times.[10]

We now consider those decisions taken by the Chamar poor that have allowed them room to bargain with landed castes. The most important of these has been the decision to desist from sharecropping. The form of sharecropping most common in Jaunpur and Saraimir is *adhiya*, where the costs of cultivation, as well as the crop itself, are shared between tenant and landowner on a half and half basis. My Chamar respondents in both fieldsites argued that *adhiya* involved a bondage much worse than that entailed by agricultural labour. It bred long-term dependence on the upper caste landed, the arrangement being good for a full agricultural year, with landowners paying their share only towards the end of the cycle. Agricultural labourers, in contrast, worked for daily wages, remaining free both of contractual

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[8] Interviews with Brahmin and Thakur farmers in Dehri.
[9] Interview, May 3, 2004, Dehri.
[10] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Dehri and Baraipar.

obligations, and the problem of late payments. Landowners, moreover, exploited the dependent status of sharecroppers, often making them labour on their fields without remuneration. Sharecroppers were also required to carry, and store, the landowner's share of the crop till the time the landowner claimed it, without being compensated for the extra labour and trouble that this entailed. In Dehri, lower backwards (Mauryas and Kashyaps), poorer sections of upper backwards (Yadavs and Kurmis), as well as non-Chamar SCs (Khatiks and Musahars) had all taken to sharecropping. In Baraipar, it was Muslim backwards (Mansooris and Ansaris) who constituted the vast bulk of sharecroppers ; amongst Hindus, Musahars alone fell amongst their ranks.[11]

One other factor explained the greater flexibility enjoyed by Chamars in their dealings with upper castes, relative to non-Chamar *bahujans*. It was not merely on account of sharecropping that lower backwards remained tied to upper castes ; there were no sharecroppers amongst the Prajapatis, Vishwakarmas and Nais in Dehri, or amongst the Prajapatis, Salmanis, Dhobis and Darzis in Baraipar. But these artisan and service communities remained tightly integrated within the village economy, and hence dependent on upper castes, who comprised the vast bulk of their consumers. Prajapatis, who were potters, relied on them for purchasing their potterware, and likewise with Vishwakarmas, who were ironsmiths. Similarly, Nais and Salmanis, who were barbers,[12] and Dhobis and Darzis, who were washermen and tailors respectively, sold most of their services to Thakurs, Brahmins, Sheikhs, or Pathans, as the case may be. Kashyaps in Dehri, over and above being sharecroppers, also remained engaged as cooks and domestic servants in Thakur and Brahmin households. Amongst SCs in the village, Musahars maintained especially close links with these communities ; they were not only sharecroppers, but also made a living selling their wares (plates and glasses made from leaves), on occasions such as weddings and funerals, to landed castes.[13]

But Chamars, in contrast, chose to discontinue the traditional services they had provided, the most significant of which were midwifery, the cleaning of upper

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[11] Interviews with Chamar, Kashyap and Musahar respondents in Dehri, and Mansoori and Ansari respondents in Baraipar.
[12] Nais and Salmanis are both barber castes, the former Hindu, the latter Muslim.
[13] Interviews with lower backward respondents in Dehri and Baraipar.

caste toilets, and carrying and applying manure fertilizer to upper caste fields.[14] As one Chamar woman in Dehri put it :

They [ie.Thakurs] still come and ask us to deliver babies. We tell them to go and get nurses from the government hospital. It [ie. midwifery] is a dirty job ... they expect us to clean up everything afterwards. And they pay us nothing. Sometimes they give us grains. We have no dignity doing this, so we have stopped. [15]

In the West, it was their severance of ties with landed castes that distinguished Chamar labour from the lower backward and non-Chamar SC poor, who continued to remain materially dependent on these communities. In the East, in contrast, both groups of *bahujans* maintained links with the landed. Chamars, however, made choices that allowed them room to negotiate their terms of work, even as they continued to rely on upper castes for their living. They thus succeeded in forcing open a space for resistance within what remained, on the whole, an oppressive relationship.

It is from the perspective of this space opened up by Chamar labour that we need to make sense of the BSP's impact on the Chamar poor in the East. The most significant consequence of BSP rule for Chamar labour has been the widening of this space, enabling more activity in the realm of strikes. Resistance, we might remember, has had little to do with Chamar politics in the West. Chamar labour there have severed their ties to the land, made the move to urban and industrial occupations, and invested in education ; their expectations of the BSP have thus revolved around quotas, and government sector jobs. Resistance has not been an issue, because subordination has not been one either. In the East, in contrast, the BSP's coming to power has led to a spurt in labour action even as Chamars have continued to be caught in the same oppressive relationships. It is for this reason that caste politics in the East has been far more fraught with contradictions and violence, both during BSP rule and after, than in the West.

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[14] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Dehri, and Dumri.
[15] Interview, May 23, 2004, Dehri.

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2.2. THE BSP AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT OF CHAMAR LABOUR

The BSP's coming to power has not only enhanced scope for material resistance, but also brought psychological empowerment to Chamars. The psychological benefits secured by BSP governments have been much the same as in the West ; these have come mainly in the form of a subaltern-friendly state and administration, and a vastly improved situation of law and order. Mayawati's use of state power to pursue upper caste criminals has taken on spectacular dimensions in the East, culminating in the arrest of Raghuraj Pratap Singh, or Raja Bhaiyya, a notorious Thakur landlord and criminal from Pratapgarh district, who was infamous for terrorizing the poor in his estate in Kunda. Though Raja Bhaiyya had friends in the BJP, particularly amongst Thakurs (he served as a minister in the BJP government of Rajnath Singh, a Thakur, during the period 2000-2002), it was in course of the BJP's alliance with the BSP, forged after the 2002 elections, that he was arrested. Mayawati cited Raja Bhaiyya's kidnapping and intimidation of BJP MLA, Puran Singh Bundela, as the immediate reason for the move. Later, however, following the discovery of weapons in his home, he was booked under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), as well as the Gangster Act.[16]

Raja Bhaiyya's arrest caused an uproar in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, where Pratapgarh district lay, on Jaunpur's western border. No event could have more spectacularly showcased the subversive possibilities of low caste rule, or the social justice agenda of the BSP government, than having a Thakur aristocrat so revered by his coethnics, and one who had so effectively evaded the law for such a long time, finally put behind bars. It amounted to a humiliation few Thakurs were able to digest, and recover from ; that it should be meted out by a Chamar made the pill all the more bitter. It was not surprising, therefore, that Raja Bhaiyya's arrest marked an important episode in the alienation of Thakurs from the BJP ; it was a common refrain amongst Thakurs in my fieldwork villages that "it was unthinkable that this could have happened while the BJP was in government," signalling as it did the BJP's

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[16] See J.P. Shukla, "Two Independent MLAs Arrested in UP," *Hindu*, November 4, 2002 ; Purnima S. Tripathi, "By Hook or By Crook," *Frontline*, February 28, 2003, 43-45 ; and Girish Kuber, "Good or Bad, Raja Bhaiyya Reigns Over Pratapgarh," *Economic Times*, April 26, 2007.

failure to exercise any control over the BSP, its coalition partner.[17] To Chamars, on the other hand, the arrest represented a symbolic reversal of caste hierarchy, besides signalling the kind of future the BSP would be able to secure for them, were it to come to power on its own.

The BSP's implementation of the SC/ST Act has served as the other key instrument of psychological empowerment in the East. Amongst SCs, it is agricultural labour who remain most vulnerable to atrocities committed by upper castes ; as such, it is in the East, where the SC poor continue to labour on upper caste fields, that the Act's implementation has had the greatest impact. Chamars in both Dehri and Baraipar have used the Act against Thakurs and Sheikhs in their respective villages. In Dehri, the Act has been invoked twice ; the first time by a Chamar woman who was assaulted by the *pradhan's* uncle for having refused to work for him, and the second time by a Chamar whose son was abused, and beaten up, also by a member of the *pradhan's* clan. In both cases, the Thakurs involved had approached the aggrieved parties offering money, and asking for the dispute to be "settled within the village" ; this offer, however, had been turned down each time. In Baraipar, Chamars had used the Act against a resident of the village, and an important man in the Azamgarh unit of the SP, who had assaulted some Chamars for allowing their livestock to stray onto his fields.[18] The most spectacular instance of the Act's application, however, occurred in Dadra village, in Jaunpur, where Chamars invoked the Act retrospectively to punish a group of Thakurs for having burnt down their hamlet fourteen years earlier. With some amongst the guilty already being dead, the culprits who were living were rounded up by the police, and suffered the humiliation of having to spend a good amount of time in prison.[19]

Having said this, the BSP's efforts at symbolic empowerment have been fiercely contested by upper castes in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. This contestation has manifested itself in various ways : in the continual destruction and theft of Ambedkar statues put up by Chamars, the short jail terms served by offenders guilty of violating serious provisions of the SC/ST Act, and the siphoning off of AVP funds to villages with miniscule SC populations, all of this having occurred while the BSP was in

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[17] Interviews with Thakur respondents in Dehri and Dadra.
[18] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Dehri and Baraipar.
[19] Interviews with BSP cadres in Dadra.

power.[20] It is in terms of caste ideology, which remains especially rigid in the East, that this contestation is to be understood. In Western Uttar Pradesh, the *bahujan-non-bahujan* face-off pits SCs against backward castes, not upper castes ; this face-off, as such, has less to do with issues of caste hierarchy, than those of economic subordination and dominance. In the East, in contrast, the clash involves lower castes and upper castes, which makes it not only a material, but also an ideational battle, whereby two contrary visions of the social order, one that seeks to uphold caste, and one that seeks to annihilate it, confront one another. For upper castes in the East, consequently, BSP rule poses no less of an ideological challenge than a material one ; it entails the loss, not only of economic dominance, but also of social status, derived from their place at the top of the caste ladder.[21]

With upper castes subverting BSP directives during BSP rule itself, it is not surprising that the gains secured by Chamars from this rule have been reversed upon the fall of BSP governments. The psychological dimensions of this reversal have been many : (1) taunts and beatings from landed castes - with no one to enforce the SC/ST Act, these have multiplied manifold literally overnight ; (2) the reduced sanctity of public spaces - with security being lifted from junctions and main roads in the countryside, upper castes have been free to threaten and intimidate Chamars as they have happened to pass by ; and (3) the withdrawal of courtesies on the part of the administration - Chamars have now been greeted with retorts such as : "go and complain to Mayawati now, let us see what she can do." [22]

In other words, BSP rule has not facilitated Chamar dominance in the East, as it has in the West ; there have hardly been any instances of Chamars beating up upper castes, or overriding their will in the conduct of village affairs, in my eastern fieldsites. But the contestation and reversal by upper castes has not gone unresisted by the Chamar poor. For the whole point of BSP governments has been to nurture

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[20] Interviews with BSP cadres in Dehri.

[21] The spatial organization of the village in Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh points to the different caste ideologies reigning in the two regions. While villages remain organized by caste (with people of the same caste living in the same hamlet) in both regions, there is virtually no distance separating lower caste hamlets from the others in the West ; these stand adjacent to one another, with one beginning where the other ends. This is not the case in the East, where lower caste hamlets lie almost a kilometre or two away from upper caste neighbourhoods. Also, while it is possible to find SC hamlets located practically in the middle of the village in the West, these almost always lie on the margins of the village in the East.

[22] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Dehri and Dadra.

habits of resistance amongst *bahujans*, and inculcate in them the will to fight back, not only during BSP rule, but even more importantly, when the party was no longer in power.

2.3. THE BSP AND THE MATERIAL EMPOWERMENT OF CHAMAR LABOUR

This section analyses the efforts made by the BSP in the material realm. The BSP has pursued its goal of SC material empowerment via different routes in the East : (1) job quotas ; (2) the AVP ; (3) land distribution ; and (4) the implementation of the SC/ST Act (which, though primarily an instrument of psychological empowerment, has had some indirect material consequences for Chamar labour). This section discusses the party's efforts in each of these realms in turn.

Job Quotas

I have argued in Chapter 4 that the BSP's strict implementation of reservations, while mostly benefitting the Chamar middle class, has allowed a small section of Chamar labour access to government sector jobs in the West. The situation vis-à-vis quotas has been different in the East ; here, the BSP's efforts have failed to bring about any inter-generational occupational mobility whatsoever amongst the Chamar poor. Middle class Chamars have benefitted from reservations almost without exception ; there have been significantly fewer occupational breakthroughs achieved by Chamar labour, than in the West.

A consideration of the jobholding data from my fieldwork villages helps illustrate this situation.[23] The contrast with the West could not be starker ; while there were 30 and 17 Chamars holding government jobs in Alipura and Dalki respectively, the corresponding numbers for Dehri and Baraipar were 2 and 1. 2 of the 3 (67 percent) Chamars employed in the public sector in the last two villages, moreover, occupied Class IV (menial) positions, whereas only 16 out of 30 (53 percent), and 9 out of 17 (53 percent), held such jobs in Alipura and Dalki. Again, only 1 of the 3 (33

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[23] The data used in this section is drawn from a job profile study of SCs conducted in the four villages of Dehri, Baraipar, Dadra and Malari.

percent) job-holders in Dehri and Baraipar (a clerk, who resided in Baraipar) held a Class III position, the corresponding figures being higher for both Alipura and Dalki - 11 out of 30 (37 percent), and 8 out of 17 (47 percent), respectively. There were, furthermore, no Class II officers in Dehri and Baraipar, while there were 3 in Alipura. The two other villages where I studied the job situation of Chamars yielded no fresh insights ; these were Dadra in Jaunpur, and Malari in Saraimir, both villages with large Chamar populations. There were only 2 Chamars, both holding Class IV positions, in Dadra, while there were none holding government jobs in Malari. Unlike Rampuri and Mansurpur, the third and fourth villages studied in the West, none of the four villages surveyed in the East had Chamars in white-collar, private sector jobs, or in the professions.

An important difference between Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh pertains to the specifically urban concentration of cultural capital in the East. The rural-urban divide coincides with the lower class-middle class divide amongst Chamars here ; the relative absence of educated, job-holding Chamars in the countryside goes a long way towards explaining why so few among Chamar labour enter the competition for quotas, and succeed. For educated job-holders, apart from helping cultural capital accumulate within their own households, also provide models for other villagers to emulate. Recall how "successful" Chamar youth were held up as models for emulation by Chamar parents in Alipura. Few such models were available to the Chamar poor in my eastern fieldsites. There were no retired government servants amongst Chamars in the villages surveyed ; the one Chamar who held a Class III position had to his credit, made it on his own – he had had no relatives holding state sector jobs.

There were only two non-Chamar SC communities, ie. Khatiks and Musahars, living in Dehri, Baraipar, Dadra and Malari. None of the Musahars held jobs in the state sector ; of the Khatiks, 2 (1 in Dehri, and 1 in Dadra) held government jobs, both being Class IV positions. While Balmikis, the non-Chamar SC community studied in the West, had also occupied menial positions in the government sector, their situation remained very different from that of Chamars, many of whom had made it to Class II and III positions. This stratification between Chamars and non-Chamar SCs was absent in Eastern Uttar Pradesh ; the status of

these groups vis-à-vis government jobs remained much the same here. This was, indeed, one of the reasons why there was greater solidarity between Chamars and non-Chamar subalterns in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, relative to the West.

Ambedkar Village Programme (AVP)

I have argued in Chapter 4 that the criteria adopted for choosing Ambedkar villages, and the number of villages selected, demonstrate the priorities that different governments have accorded to the SC constituency in the state. Tables 5.6 -5.9 lay out the data pertaining to these two variables from Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts, which show that the administration of the AVP has followed much the same trajectory in the East as in the West.[24]

The period 1990-1995, during which time the SP and BJP ruled the state, saw 5 villages, all with SC populations of 50 percent or more, chosen from each of the two districts annually, which was also the pattern in the West. The year 1995, however, saw a BSP-BJP coalition led by Mayawati come to power, which led to far more villages being selected that year, ie. 150 in Jaunpur, and 260 in Azamgarh. Mayawati also issued an order asking officials to move beyond the 50 percent criterion the following year, ie. to adopt villages where SCs constituted less than half the populace, while being careful to follow the descending order principle, ie. prioritize villages with a higher proportion of SCs. This edict governed the selection of Ambedkar villages during President's Rule in 1996 –1997, with the BSP, upon returning to power in 1997, also adhering to the same principle. Thus, of the 100 villages chosen in Jaunpur in 1997, 98 (98 percent) belonged to the 20-49 percent category, the figure being lower for Azamgarh, ie. 54 out of 101 (53.46 percent).

The BJP, which ruled the state from 1998 to 2002, turned the AVP around to serve a contrary purpose ; BJP governments adopted villages in the 20-49 percent range, and in Azamgarh, even villages with SC populations of less than 20 percent, *without honouring the descending order principle.*[25] 99 percent (99 out of 100) of the villages selected by the BJP in Jaunpur in 1998-1999 belonged to the 20-49 percent category ;

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[24] All data pertaining to the AVP presented so far in this section was obtained from the District Rural Development Agency, Jaunpur and Azamgarh.

[25] Interview with an official in the AVP unit of the District Rural Development Agency, Jaunpur, April 16, 2004.

in Azamgarh, 77.22 percent (78 out of 101) belonged to this category, the remainder falling in the "less than 20 percent" range. This trend continued through the remaining years of BJP rule, leading to the neglect of villages with larger SC populations that had been earlier selected by BSP governments, in which AVP projects still remained unfinished. The BSP, upon returning to power in 2002, reselected those villages.

Table 5.6 : Selection of Villages under the Ambedkar Village
Programme : Jaunpur District (1990-2003)

	Jaunpur District			
	Number Of Villages Selected Annually	SC Population Percentage in Selected Villages		
		50% And Above	20-49%	Below 20%
1990-1995 SP and BJP Governments	5 (100%)	5 (100%)		
1995-1996 BSP Government	150 (100%)	150 (100%)		
1996-1997 President's Rule	100 (100%)	30 (30%)	70 (70%)	
1997-1998 BSP Government	100 (100%)	2 (2%)	98 (98%)	
1998-1999 BJP Government	100 (100%)	1 (1%)	99 (99%)	
1999-2000 BJP Government	100 (100%)	1 (1%)	99 (99%)	
2000-2001 BJP Government	1000 (100%)	1 (1%)	99 (99%)	
2001-2002 BJP Government	100 (100%)		80 (80%)	20 (20%)
2002-2003 BSP Government	369 (100%)	185 (50.13%)	184 (49.86%)	

Source : District Rural Development Agency, Jaunpur.
Notes : (1) The villages selected in 1999-2000 were re-selected in 2000-2001, the aim being to complete all AVP programmes therein.
(2) The leap in the number of villages selected in 2002-2003 is explained by the inclusion of all those villages that had been selected in 1995-1996 and 1997-1998, in which work had yet to be completed.

Table 5.7 : Selection of Villages under the Ambedkar Village Programme : Azamgarh District (1990-2003)

	Azamgarh District			
	Number Of Villages Selected Annually	SC Population Percentage in Selected Villages		
		50% And Above	20-49%	Below 20%
1990-1995 SP and BJP Governments	5 (100%)	5 (100%)		
1995-1996 BSP Government	260 (100%)	260 (100%)		
1996-1997 President's Rule	138 (100%)	26 (18.84 %)	112 (81.15%)	
1997-1998 BSP Government	101 (100%)	47 (46.53%)	54 (53.46%)	
1998-1999 BJP Government	101 (100%)		78 (77.22%)	23 (22.77%)
1999-2000 BJP Government	101 (100%)		83 (82.17%)	18 (17.82%)
2000-2001 BJP Government			83 (82.17%)	18 (17.82%)
2001-2002 BJP Government	97 (100%)		82 (84.53%)	15 (15.46%)
2002-2003 BSP Government	263 (100%)	20 (7.6%)	151 (57.41%)	92 (34.98%)

Source : District Rural Development Agency, Azamgarh.

The SP also undertook to draw resources away from SCs when it formed the government in 2003. The SP made village selection the prerogative of MLAs and MLCs, thus giving free rein to politicians to use the programme to deliver patronage, each to their "own" constituencies. That the order channelled benefits away from SCs was clear from the fact that villages in the "less than 20 percent" category trumped others in the list, for the first time, in 2003-2004. (See tables 5.8 and 5.9.)

Table 5.8 : Selection of Villages under the Samagra Gram
Vikas Yojana : Jaunpur District (2003-2004)

	Jaunpur District			
	Number Of Villages Selected	SC Population Percentage in Selected Villages		
		50% And Above	20-49%	Below 20%
2003-2004 SP Government	120 (100%)		56 (46.66%)	64 (53.33%)

Source : District Rural Development Agency, Jaunpur.

Table 5.9 : Selection of Villages under the Samagra Gram
Vikas Yojana : Azamgarh District (2003-2004)

	Number Of Villages Selected	SC Population Percentage in Selected Villages		
		50% And Above	20-49%	Below 20%
2003-2004 SP Government	140 (100%)	10 (7.14%)	55 (39.28%)	75 (53.57%)

Source : District Rural Development Agency, Azamgarh.

The AVP, as an SC empowerment scheme, was both resented and contested by upper castes in the East. Thus, Thakurs residing in villages with SC populations often colluded with state agents to deflect the programme away to other villages, so as to prevent SCs in their own village from benefitting from the scheme. The motivation here was not only to deprive SCs of the amenities and symbolic benefits brought by the programme, but also to obstruct the construction of the link road, in particular. No item on the AVP agenda engendered more conflict in Eastern Uttar Pradesh than link road construction, for the following reason. On account of land consolidation having proceeded slowly in the East, villages here frequently had no road routes chalked out on paper. In the absence of pre-existing road plans, it was sometimes necessary to take over land being cultivated by upper castes to make way for construction. In most cases, however, the road to be built lay wholly on *gaon sabha* land, that had, however, been illegally occupied by upper castes. In neither case did upper castes prove willing to give up the land, even though the administration

offered to compensate them for the loss, in the event of rightful ownership. But Mayawati's determined implementation of the AVP meant that had no choice but to capitulate eventually, which was a humiliating experience, and one that evoked great bitterness towards the BSP.[26]

While the AVP encountered more resistance from dominant castes in the East, relative to the West, its implementation by Chamars did the party much less damage in the East. In those few villages where Chamars were able to exercise real power within *panchayats*, they did not abuse this power to direct benefits away from non-Chamars SCs, which is what happened in the West. Dumri and Tikariya Madhu Khan were both villages that had Chamar *pradhans* incumbent, and in control, at the time of fieldwork ; Khatik and Musahar residents here admitted to have received their fair share of AVP benefits during the tenure of the said *pradhans*.[27] The AVP in the East, consequently, served neither to alienate non-Chamar SCs from the BSP, nor to hinder *bahujan* unity, in the manner of the West.

Land Distribution

The BSP's efforts vis-à-vis land have taken on three main thrusts in the East : (1) distributing new *gaon sabha* plots to SCs ; (2) regularizing unauthorized possession of *gaon sabha* land by SCs ; and (3) enforcing possession of plots previously allotted to SCs.

Before discussing the BSP's efforts, I briefly describe the land situation it has confronted in the East, since this has defined both the scope of its land agenda, as well as the urgency this agenda has taken on. There has been far more *gaon sabha* land available for allotment in the East, relative to the West. The consolidation of holdings has proceeded slowly in Eastern Uttar Pradesh,[28] which has made it difficult to consolidate non-holding, ie. *gaon sabha*, land. The lag in consolidation has, in turn, led to a lag in distribution, not least because upper caste farmers have occupied *gaon sabha* plots, which have for the most part bordered holdings owned by the upper caste landed, or lain as islands surrounded by fields belonging to upper castes. *Gaon*

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[26] Interviews with Thakur respondents and BSP cadres in Dehri and Dadra.
[27] Interviews with Khatik and Musahar respondents in Dumri and Tikariya Madhu Khan.
[28] Interview with the Commissioner, Consolidation, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, August 7, 2004.

sabha allocations made to subalterns in the past have, for the same reason, been largely ineffective ; upper castes have, in most cases, forcibly occupied the land, with subaltern beneficiaries failing to claim possession.[29]

But the greater availability of *gaon sabha* land does not suffice to explain the fierceness with which the BSP has pushed its land agenda in the East. A second, crucial factor has been the ties binding SC, and specifically, Chamar labour to the agrarian economy, and their subordination, arising from their landlessness, within it. The Chamar poor's failure to shift to urban and industrial occupations has led them to see landlessness as their most pressing concern ; in circumstances where Chamar labour stands little chance of clearing quotas, and getting government jobs, the BSP too has come to see landlessness as the most important hurdle standing in the way of Chamar economic empowerment. In other words, the BSP has not been able to overlook the issue of land in the East as it has in the West ; the absence of non-agrarian options facing Chamars, at least in the short term, has made it necessary for the party to tackle the problem.[30]

In what follows, I present data pertaining to the BSP's land-related performance from my fieldwork sites in the East. Data pertaining to the allocation of new *gaon sabha* plots, and regularization of unauthorized possession of *gaon sabha* land, is available for Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts, for Jaunpur and Nizamabad *tehsils* (located in Jaunpur district and Azamgarh district respectively), and for the villages of Dehri and Baraipar (the former lying in Jaunpur *tehsil*, and the latter in Nizamabad *tehsil*).[31] Data pertaining to the enforcement of possession is available at the level of the two districts alone. All three categories of data are available for three years : 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004. While the BJP ruled the state in 2001-2002, the BSP was in power in 2002-2003, and the SP in 2003-2004, thereby making inter-party comparisons possible. It emerges clearly from an analysis of the data that the BSP's performance vis-à-vis land has been better in Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

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[29] Interview with the Registrar Kanungo, Jaunpur *tehsil*, May 3, 2004. See also G. P. Mishra and D.M. Diwakar, *Land Reforms and Human Development* (New Delhi : Manak, 2005), 96-99.

[30] Interview with a senior BAMCEF official, August 10, 2004, Lucknow.

[31] Jaunpur and Nizamabad *tehsils* have been chosen because Dehri and Baraipar, my main fieldwork villages, lie within them. Jaunpur district has six *tehsils* in all : Badlapur, Kerakat, Macchlishahr, Mariahu, Shahganj, and Jaunpur itself. Azamgarh district, on the other hand, has seven *tehsils* : Sagri, Lalganj, Phulpur, Burhanpur, Nizamabad, Mehnagar, and Azamgarh.

Table 5.10 : Allocation of Gaon Sabha Land : Jaunpur District (2001-2004)

	Cultivation	Residence	Fishery	Pottery	Plantation
2001-2002 (BJP)	54.347 Hectares to 563 Beneficiaries (SC : 364 ; OBC: 150 ; Others : 49)	6.134 Hectares to 531 Beneficiaries (SC : 472 ; OBC: 59)	108.438 Hectares to 169 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 169)	2.182 Hectares to 63 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 63)	32.496 Hectares to 225 Beneficiaries (SC : 120 ; Landless : 50 ; Women : 24 ; Others : 31)
2002-2003 (BSP)	438.766 Hectares to 5554 Beneficiaries (SC : 4223 ; OBC: 852 ; Others : 479)	16.458 Hectares to 1331 Beneficiaries (SC : 1165 ; OBC: 149 ; Others : 17)	103.269 Hectares to 137 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 137)	2.274 Hectares to 60 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 60)	40.917 Hectares to 332 Beneficiaries (SC : 185 ; Landless : 78 ; Women : 13 ; Others : 56)
2003-2004 (SP)	91.441 Hectares to 1134 Beneficiaries (SC : 841 ; OBC : 290 ; Others : 3)	6.613 Hectares to 626 Beneficiaries (SC : 458 ; OBC : 165 ; Others : 3)	105.862 Hectares to 194 Beneficiaries (SC : 14 ; OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 180)	1.176 Hectares to 50 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 50)	39.396 Hectares to 350 Beneficiaries (SC : 151 ; Landless : 63; Women : 32 ; Others : 104)

Source : DLRC, Jaunpur District.

Tables 5.10 and 5.11 present the allocation and regularization data for Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts respectively. It is in the cultivation and residence categories that the BSP's performance has been the most outstanding here. With respect to cultivation, the BSP government of 2002-2003 allocated more than eight times the area distributed by the BJP government of 2001-2002, and nearly five times the area distributed by the SP government of 2003-2004, in Jaunpur. The figures for Azamgarh were still more spectacular ; here, the BSP allocated more than nine times the area distributed by the BJP, and more than four times the area distributed by the SP. In the residence category, again, the BSP allocated more than double the area distributed by the BJP, as well as the SP, in Jaunpur. Its performance in Azamgarh was yet again better than in Jaunpur, ie. more than eight times the area distributed by the BJP, and more than three times that distributed by the SP.

Table 5.11 : Allocation of Gaon Sabha Land : Azamgarh District (2001-2004)

	Cultivation	Residence	Fishery	Pottery	Plantation
2001-2002 (BJP)	156.729 Hectares to 679 Beneficiaries (SC : 326 ; OBC: 341 ; Others : 12)	8.036 Hectares to 809 Beneficiaries (SC : 761 ; OBC: 46 ; Others : 2)	21.306 Hectares to 39 Beneficiaries (SC : 11 ; OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 28)	2.479 Hectares to 85 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 85)	41.294 Hectares to 159 Beneficiaries (SC : 109 ; Landless : 11 ; Women : 2 ; Others : 37)
2002-2003 (BSP)	1415.989 Hectares to 15700 Beneficiaries (SC : 11800 ; OBC: 3600 ; Others : 300)	65.698 Hectares to 5827 Beneficiaries (SC : 4777 ; OBC: 1033 ; Others : 17)	105.969 Hectares to 168 Beneficiaries (SC : 82 ; OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 86)	7.475 Hectares to 208 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 208)	102.558 Hectares to 590 Beneficiaries (SC : 350 ; Landless : 40 ; Women : 36 ; Others : 164)
2003-2004 (SP)	337.478 Hectares to 3022 Beneficiaries (SC : 1952 ; OBC : 1004 ; Others : 66)	20. 197 Hectares to 1945 Beneficiaries (SC : 1694 ; OBC : 247 ; Others : 4)	76.325 Hectares to 108 Beneficiaries (SC : 34 ; OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 74)	9.580 Hectares to 173 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 173)	67.607 Hectares to 319 Beneficiaries (SC : 197 ; Landless : 89 ; Others : 33)

Source : DLRC, Azamgarh District.

Coming to fishery allocations, the BSP has distributed roughly the same area as the BJP and SP in Jaunpur district. In Azamgarh, however, it has allocated nearly five times the area distributed by the BJP. Fishery plots in Azamgarh have, moreover, been made out to SCs in nearly the same proportion as to OBCs, ie. Nishads, under the BSP government. The pattern has been much the same with regard to pottery and plantation plots, with the BSP doing better in Azamgarh relative to Jaunpur.

We now compare the data from Jaunpur and Azamgarh with that from Meerut and Muzaffarnagar. (See tables 4.10 and 4.11 for data from the latter two districts.) Allocations in the cultivation category (measured in terms of the area distributed) have seen the BSP outperform the BJP, as well as the SP, by approximately five times in Meerut ; in Muzaffarnagar, the BSP has outperformed the BJP by more than seven times, and the SP by more than double. While this has been no mean achievement, it has failed to keep up with the allocations made in Jaunpur and Azamgarh, discussed above. The picture has been much the same with regard to the distribution of residence plots. In Meerut, the BSP has allocated nearly double the area distributed by the SP, and in Muzaffarnagar, more than double the

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area distributed by the BJP. But the BSP's allocations in Jaunpur and Azamgarh have outstripped the BJP's and SP's by a much greater margin. And while the BSP has allocated less than double the area distributed by the BJP and SP in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar for fishery, pottery and plantation purposes, its allocations have consistently doubled the BJP's allocations in Azamgarh.

Table 5.12 : Allocation of Gaon Sabha Land : Jaunpur Tehsil, Jaunpur District (2001-2004)

	Cultivation	Residence	Fishery	Pottery	Plantation
2001-2002 (BJP)	8. 000 Hectares to 82 Beneficiaries (SC : 62 ; OBC: 20)	0.933 Hectares to 80 Beneficiaries (SC : 65 ; OBC : 15)	18. 024 Hectares to 26 Beneficiaries (SC : 5 ; OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 21)	0.203 Hectares to 6 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 6)	5.000 Hectares to 44 Beneficiaries (SC : 38 ; OBC : 6)
2002-2003 (BSP)	27. 970 Hectares to 580 Beneficiaries (SC : 350 ; OBC: 19)	2.208 Hectares to 173 Beneficiaries (SC : 152 ; OBC: 19 ; Others : 2)	15.000 Hectares to 25 Beneficiaries (SC : 5 ; OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 20)	0.412 Hectares to 6 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 6)	5.008 Hectares to 59 Beneficiaries (SC : 42 ; OBC : 17)
2003-2004 (SP)	10.002 Hectares to 160 Beneficiaries (SC : 118 ; OBC : 42)	1.114 Hectares to 100 Beneficiaries (SC : 48 ; OBC : 51 ; Others : 1)	15.000 Hectares to 33 Beneficiaries (SC : 5 ; OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 28)	0.153 Hectares to 6 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 6)	5.002 Hectares to 65 Beneficiaries (SC : 1 ; OBC : 64)

Source : Registrar Kanungo, Jaunpur Tehsil, Jaunpur District.

The *tehsil*-level data pertaining to allocation and regularization merely confirms the trends described above. (See tables 5.12 and 5.13.) The BSP has clearly outperformed the BJP and SP vis-à-vis cultivation and residence allocations in the *tehsils*, though not to the same extent as in the districts. It has also allocated more land than these other parties for fishery, pottery and plantation purposes here, as in the districts.[32] The BSP's performance, in these last three categories has, however, been better in Nizamabad *tehsil*, where it has surpassed the BJP's and SP's by a higher margin. This is not altogether surprising, and reflects trends at the district level,

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[32] There has been one sole exception, however, pertaining to fishery allocations in Jaunpur *tehsil*. Here, the BJP government allocated 18.024 hectares, whereas the BSP government allocated 15.000. See Table 5.12.

where the BSP's performance in these categories has been better in Azamgarh, relative to Jaunpur. (Nizamabad *tehsil*, we may recall, lies in Azamgarh district.)

Table 5.13 : Allocation of Gaon Sabha Land : Nizamabad Tehsil, Azamgarh District (2001-2004)

	Cultivation	Residence	Fishery	Pottery	Plantation
2001-2002 (BJP)	10.681 Hectares to 110 Beneficiaries (SC : 80 ; OBC : 30)	2.950 Hectares to 260 Beneficiaries (SC : 170 ; OBC : 90)	2.011 Hectares to 3 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 3)	0.110 Hectares to 3 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 3)	3.425 Hectares to 30 Beneficiaries (SC : 10; OBC : 20)
2002-2003 (BSP)	60.107 Hectares to 850 Beneficiaries (SC : 710 ; OBC: 140)	5.570 Hectares to 550 Beneficiaries (SC : 450 ; OBC: 60 ; Others : 40)	12.730 Hectares to 18 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 18)	0.406 Hectares to 10 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste : 10)	12 Hectares to 110 Beneficiaries (SC : 30 ; OBC : 80)
2003-2004 (SP)	22.735 Hectares to 250 Beneficiaries (SC : 140 ; OBC : 60)	2.860 Hectares to 277 Beneficiaries (SC : 210 ; OBC: 67)	11.975 Hectares to 14 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Nishad, ie. fishing, caste : 14)	0.260 Hectares to 7 Beneficiaries (OBCs, from the Prajapati, ie. potter, caste :7)	11.975 Hectares to 90 Beneficiaries (SC : 20 ; OBC : 70)

Source : Registrar Kanungo, Nizamabad Tehsil, Azamgarh District.

Having analysed the allocation and regularization figures, I now discuss the data pertaining to the enforcement of possession.[33] This data, as I have mentioned before, is available only at the level of the districts. In Jaunpur, the year 2002-2003 saw 7572 individuals, the vast majority of them SCs, benefit from the BSP's drive to restore *gaon sabha* plots to their rightful owners. All of these 7572 beneficiaries were subalterns who had been allotted land at an earlier point of time, but who had lost possession, mostly on account of forcible occupation by upper castes. In Azamgarh, the number of beneficiaries amounted to 8694. It may be noted that neither the BJP government of 2001-2002, nor the SP government of 2003-2004, had adopted any comparable programme ; as such, the enforcement figures for these two years came to nil in both Jaunpur and Azamgarh. As for the BSP itself, it was not just in 2002-2003, but also in 1995-1996, and 1997-1998, that the party had made the restoration

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[33] Interviews with the DLRC, Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts, Jaunpur, May 20, 2004, and Azamgarh, June 30, 2004.

of possession a top priority. The data for these other years was, however, not available.[34]

It will be pertinent to recall the land bureaucracy's fabrication of enforcement data in Western Uttar Pradesh at the point. The land administration in the East faced as much pressure to deliver, if not more. But opportunities for fabrication did not arise here, on account of the BSP's much stricter surveillance of officials in the East.

I have argued that the BSP's efforts to bring empowerment to Chamars in the East have met with upper caste resistance, with gains secured by the BSP being reversed during non-BSP rule. Nowhere has this been more true than in the realm of land. Thus, many of the plots restored to Chamars by BSP governments have been reoccupied by upper castes, once those governments have fallen ; this has been the case in both Dehri and Baraipar.   The Congress had made out forty *gaon sabha* plots to Chamars and Yadavs in Dehri in 1984. While Yadavs had taken possession of all the 12 plots allotted to them, the 28 plots allotted to Chamars had in all but 8 cases been forcibly occupied by Thakur and Brahmin farmers. While 20 of these plots had been restored to Chamars during Mayawati's third term, they had been fast reoccupied when the SP came to power in 2003. In Baraipar, a similar situation had unfolded, with Sheikhs reclaiming the *gaon sabha* land that the BSP had allocated to Chamars and Prajapatis in 1997, upon the BJP's forming the government in 1998.[35]

Chamar cadres who have taken on leadership roles in the drive for enforcement have, furthermore, found themselves harrassed and intimidated, once non-BSP regimes have came to power. The threat posed to upper castes by the BSP's land agenda has even been large enough, at times, to warrant the cold-blooded murder of BSP personnel. Murders have been especially common prior to *panchayat* elections ; the danger of BSP cadres of gutsy disposition assuming leadership positions in *panchayats* have led landed communities, in particular, Thakurs and Sheikhs, to kill the candidates in question. Assembly elections, particularly those held from the mind-1990s onwards, have invited violence as well ; landed

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[34] This was because the land administration had not only merged the enforcement figures with the allocation data, but also merged annual figures to maintain cumulative data, for the entire period leading up to 2000-2001.

[35] Interviews with BSP cadres in Dehri and Baraipar.

communities fearful of the BSP's impending victory have considered it prudent to "remove" local party actors most likely to make use of BSP rule to push the agenda of SC material empowerment.[36]

To sum up, the significance of the landlessness problem faced by SCs in the East has motivated the BSP to implement its land agenda with more determination here, relative to the West. But the BSP has encountered significant opposition to its land agenda while in power ; the gains it has achieved for Chamars have also been reversed to a considerable degree once other parties have formed the government. The road to Chamar material empowerment has thus been rocky, and marked by setbacks every now and then. But BSP rule has also emboldened Chamars to the extent that they have no longer been willing to take these setbacks lying down. Their continued material reliance on upper castes has, of course, provided room for repression, which in turn has been met with further resistance. This cycle of repression and resistance has been the most significant hallmark, and legacy, of the BSP's land-related efforts in the East.

The Implementation of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act :

The BSP's implementation of the SC/ST Act, primarily a source of psychological empowerment, has helped boost Chamar labour's capacity to undertake strike action, and raise wages. The immunity from intimidation provided by the Act has made it difficult for upper castes to beat striking agricultural labourers, or bully them into resuming work, which has enhanced scope for successful bargaining.

Chamars in Dehri pointed out that they had seen days where, what amounted to a day's payment today had to be shared between three labourers, each having done a full day's work. The rise in wages had come about through strike action undertaken over the years, with the pre-BSP phase being marked by a relatively low frequency of strikes. Chamars had taken to stopping work more frequently following the BSP's ascension to office in 1995 ; the last two significant hikes in wage, whereby it had gone up from nine to ten, and then from ten to twelve, kilograms of wheat per day, had come about through intense bargaining undertaken over a very short period of

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[36] Interviews with BSP cadres in Dehri, Baraipar, Dumri and Malari.

time, stretching from July 2002-December 2003.[37] After the last strike action, undertaken in 2003, Chamars in Dehri had taken to "not even showing [Thakurs] what they were taking home" ; as one irate Thakur farmer put it, "they do not even open the *bojh* [bundle of grain], or let us look any more." [38]

The situation in Baraipar has, however, been different ; here, the relatively smaller plots owned by Muslim farmers has made it difficult for Chamar labour to strike successfully, both before and after the emergence of the BSP. While the BSP's implementation of the SC/ST Act has ruled out beatings and threats, it has not prevented the Muslim landed from hiring labourers from neighbouring villages, or Saraimir town, to replace striking Chamars.

On the whole, however, the SC/ST Act has certainly helped widen the space available to Chamar labour from which to bargain with employers. The Act has, indeed, affected non-Chamar farm hands as well, in those instances where they have benefitted from wage raises negotiated by Chamars, as they have in Dehri. This has, however, not been a matter of jealousy, or resentment, that has served to divide Chamars from lower backwards and non-Chamar SCs in the East.

2.4. EXPLAINING CHAMAR LABOUR'S SUPPORT FOR THE BSP

The Chamar poor in the East have delivered the BSP a trust-based, future-oriented vote, just as their counterparts have done in the West. But the rationale underlying this support has been different in the two regions. This rationale has turned around quotas, and expectations of government sector jobs in Western Uttar Pradesh ; in the East, where Chamar labour remain tied to the agrarian economy, and occupy a subordinate position within it, this rationale has turned around land instead.

While the BSP has pursued a land agenda with the utmost urgency in the East, its efforts have still fallen short of fully addressing the problem of landlessness. But the grit demonstrated by the party in encountering upper caste resistance, mounted from both within and outside the state, has more than made up for this shortcoming in performance. This grit has provided evidence of the BSP's material commitment to the Chamar poor, while the reversal of gains, and the violence

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[37] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Dehri.
[38] Interview, Dehri, May 17, 2004.

unleashed on cadres, has underlined the enormity of the BSP's task, on the other hand.

The support extended to the BSP has, in other words, turned not simply around benefits delivered by the party (which resistance and reversal has made halting and fragile), but also around expectations pertaining to its future performance. The hope has been that, given the BSP's commitment to a material agenda, the party could be counted on to deliver, once it commanded a majority, and formed a government of its own. It is, in this sense, that Chamar labour may be seen to have delivered the BSP a future–oriented vote. This vote has also rested crucially, on trust, generated by the perception of the BSP as a party that remains ready to make the sacrifices entailed by the pursuit of *bahujan* empowerment, in this case, empowerment turning specifically around land.

3. Asymmetric Representation and the BSP's Different Contracts

3.1. CHAMAR LABOUR AND THE COSTS OF SUPPORTING THE BSP

The story of Chamar labour's support for the BSP is, however, incomplete without a discussion of the burdens that this support has entailed. These burdens have been much the same as in Western Uttar Pradesh, namely, a loss of coethnic representation, and an ensuing loss of patronage and symbolic benefits, following the BSP's multiethnic turn. In Eastern Uttar Pradesh, however, the election of upper castes have imposed an additional burden on the Chamar poor. Being employers of Chamar labour, upper caste MLAs have benefitted from disrupting the flow of protection BSP governments have usually afforded to this constituency.

The Situation in Non-Reserved Constituencies

A look at the caste background of BSP candidates, nominated in state assembly constituencies in Jaunpur and Azamgarh districts, over the period 1989-2007, illustrates my point about the declining coethnic representation of Chamar voters over time. (See tables 5.14 and 5.15.) I discuss the non-reserved constituencies first. A much lower percentage of *bahujans* received nominations in Jaunpur and Azamgarh, than in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar, during the 1989-1998 period. While

21 of the 24 nominations made in the two western districts in this phase went to *bahujans,* the corresponding figures for the two eastern districts were 24 out of 56 nominations. Again, while upper castes received tickets in the 1996 elections in both regions, only 1 nomination was awarded to this constituency in the West, as compared to 6 in the East. Upper backwards, furthermore, were nominated in the West only in 1996 ; in the East, in contrast, they received tickets much earlier, from

Table 5.14 : Caste Background of Candidates Nominated by the BSP in State Assembly Constituencies in Jaunpur District (1989-2007)

	1989 State Assembly Elections	1991 State Assembly Elections	1993 State Assembly Elections	1996 State Assembly Elections	2002 State Assembly Elections	2007 State Assembly Elections
Reserved Constituencies : 2	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 2	Nominations : 2
	Chamar (SC) : 2	Chamar (SC) : 2	Chamar (SC) : 2	Chamar (SC) : 2	Chamar (SC) : 2	Chamar (SC) : 2
Non-Reserved Constituencies : 8	Nominations : 7	Nominations : 8	Nominations : 6	Nominations : 7	Nominations : 8	Nominations : 8
	Khatik (SC) : 1 Noniya (Lower Backward) : 1 Kurmi (Upper Backward) : 2 Yadav (Upper Backward) : 2 Muslim (Backward) : 1	Chamar (SC) : 1 Rajbhar (Lower Backward) : 2 Yadav (Upper Backward) : 4 Muslim (Backward) : 1	Vishwakarma (Lower Backward) : 1 Yadav (Upper Backward) : 4 Muslim (Forward) : 1	Yadav (Upper Backward) : 1 Thakur (Upper Caste) : 4 Bhoomihar (Upper Caste) : 1 Muslim (Forward) : 1	Kurmi (Upper Backward) : 1 Yadav (Upper Backward) : 2 Brahmin (Upper Caste) : 1 Thakur (Upper Caste) : 3 Bhoomihar (Upper Caste) : 1	Maurya (Upper Backward) : 1 Kurmi (Upper Backward) : 1 Yadav (Upper Backward) : 2 Brahmin (Upper Caste) : 3 Bhoomihar (Upper Caste) : 1

Source : BSP, Jaunpur District Unit.
Note : The two reserved state assembly constituencies in Jaunpur are Shahganj and Kerakat. The non-reserved constituencies are Rari, Barsathi, Mariahu, Jaunpur, Gadwara, Khutahan, Macchlishahr, and Bayalsi.

1989 onwards. Coming to Muslims, while all 10 candidates in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar came from backward castes, 4 of the 10 candidates in Jaunpur and Azamgarh belonged to forward communities. And within the category of *bahujan*

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nominations itself, Chamars did a lot worse in the East ; they received only 2 of the 24 tickets awarded to *bahujans* here, the figures for the West being 6 out of 21.

Table 5.15 : Caste Background of Candidates Nominated by the BSP in State Assembly Constituencies in Azamgarh District (1989-2007)

	1989 State Assembly Elections	1991 State Assembly Elections	1993 State Assembly Elections	1996 State Assembly Elections	2002 State Assembly Elections	2007 State Assembly Elections
Reserved Constituencies : 3	Nominations : 3	Nominations : 3	Nominations : 1	Nominations : 3	Nominations : 3	Nominations : 3
	Chamar (SC) : 3	Chamar (SC) : 3	Chamar (SC) : 1	Chamar (SC) : 3	Chamar (SC) : 3	Chamar (SC) : 3
Non-Reserved Constituencies : 8	Nominations : 8	Nominations : 8	Nominations : 5	Nominations : 7	Nominations : 8	Nominations : 8
	Chamar (SC) : 1 Pasi (SC) : 1 Noniya (Lower Backward) : 1 Rajbhar (Lower Backward) : 1 Kurmi (Upper Backward) : 1 Yadav (Upper Backward) : 2 Muslim (Backward) : 1	Pasi (SC) : 1 Rajbhar (Lower Backward) : 1 Kurmi (Upper Backward) : 1 Yadav (Upper Backward) : 3 Muslim (Backward) : 2	Pasi (SC) : 1 Rajbhar (Lower Backward) : 1 Yadav (Upper Backward) : 2 Muslim (Forward) : 1	Pasi (SC) : 1 Rajbhar (Lower Backward) : 2 Nishad (Lower Backward) : 1 Thakur (Upper Caste) : 1 Muslim (Backward) : 1 Muslim (Forward) : 1	Rajbhar (Lower Backward) : 2 Yadav (Upper Backward) : 1 Thakur (Upper Caste) : 1 Bhoomihar (Upper Caste) : 1 Muslim (Backward) : 1 Muslim (Forward) : 2	Rajbhar (Lower Backward) : 1 Yadav (Upper Backward) : 4 Brahmin (Upper Caste) : 1 Muslim (Backward) : 1 Muslim (Forward) : 1

Source : BSP, Azamgarh District Unit.

Note : The three reserved state assembly constituencies in Azamgarh are Saraimir, Mehnagar and Mohammedabad-Gohna. The non-reserved constituencies are Phulpur, Atraulia, Gopalpur, Azamgarh, Lalganj, Nizamabad, Mubarakpur and Sagri.

The data for the 1998-2007 phase shows the proportion of non-*bahujan* candidates shooting up from 57.14 percent (24 out of 56), in the earlier period, to 84.37 percent (27 out of 32), in the East. In the West, the percentage rose from 12.5 percent (3 out of 24) to 52.17 percent (12 out of 23). Chamars received no tickets in

this phase in either region ; *bahujan* nominations went only to lower OBCs amongst Hindus, and backward castes amongst Muslims.

The BSP has thus nominated fewer *bahujans* in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, not only in the 1998-2007 period, but also prior to 1998. Chamars, in particular, have received very few tickets in the East during this early phase. This suggests that Chamars, and *bahujans* in general, have borne costs associated with the loss of coethnic nominations, not only to a larger extent, but also for a longer duration, in the East, relative to the West. The BSP's ability to nominate upper backwards and upper castes so early on in the East has hinged on the earlier consolidation, and greater strength, of a subaltern coalition here. For it is only because sections of non-Chamar SCs, lower OBCs, and backward Muslims, not to mention Chamars, have supported BSP candidates irrespective of caste that the party has been able to grant tickets to non-*bahujans*.[39] In the West, where these constituencies have voted only for coethnic candidates, non-*bahujan* nominations have been much riskier.

Table 5.16 : Names and Caste Background of Candidates Nominated by the BSP in Jaunpur State Assembly Constituency, Jaunpur District (1989-2007)

	1989 State Assembly Elections	1991 State Assembly Elections	1993 State Assembly Elections	1996 State Assembly Elections	2002 State Assembly Elections	2007 State Assembly Elections
Jaunpur (Non-Reserved Constituency)	Mohammed Taufik : Muslim (Backward)	Mohammed Taufik : Muslim (Backward)	Mohammed Arshad Khan : Muslim (Forward)	Pervez Alam Bhutto : Muslim (Forward)	Dinesh Tandon : Brahmin (Upper Caste)	Tej Bahadur Maurya : Maurya (Upper Backward)

Source : BSP, Jaunpur District Unit.

We now turn to discuss the BSP's politics of nominations in my fieldsite, the state assembly constituency of Jaunpur, specifically. The BSP nominated a backward Muslim candidate here in the 1989 and 1991 elections, and a forward Muslim candidate in the elections of 1993 and 1996. The 2002 elections saw it nominate a Brahmin, ie. upper caste, and the 2007 election a Maurya, ie. upper backward. (See Table 5.16.) Jaunpur thus exemplifies the trend of BSP nominations in the East, with non-*bahujans* receiving more tickets overall, as well as half the nominations awarded in the pre-1998 phase. But, electorally speaking, the BSP has not done well in this

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[39] Interview with BAMCEF official, July 12, 2004, Azamgarh.

constituency ; it won the seat only once, in 1993, when it benefitted from a pre-electoral alliance with the SP.

The candidate in 1993 was Mohammed Arshad Khan, a Pathan, ie. forward Muslim, who completely overlooked Chamars, and *bahujans* in general, during his term as MLA. He channelled patronage to rich and landed Muslims instead ; his term was, additionally, associated with many of the problems that Chamars typically faced when members of landed communities got elected in the East. As my Chamar respondents in Dehri recalled, Khan had accorded protection to coethnic constituents guilty of intimidating SC labour, and molesting Chamar women.

It was, furthermore, not simply upper caste MLAs who sought to protect their coethnics from the consequences of their actions vis-à-vis the *bahujan* poor. The BSP's courting of the non-*bahujan* vote had also encouraged upper castes to enter the party organization, and use their status as party members to protect coethnic interests. Two Thakurs in Dehri were thus members of the BSP ; Chamars in the village pointed out that they always made it difficult for Chamars in Dehri, as well as in neighbouring villages, to report abuses committed by Thakurs in the area.[40]

Nominating non-*bahujans* had also cost the BSP heavily for another reason, namely, defections. The party was particularly affected in Jaunpur in this regard; this district saw two BSP MLAs, Shailendra Yadav (Yadav, ie. upper backward) and Vinod Kumar Singh (Thakur, ie. upper caste), elected from Khutahan and Macchlishahr respectively in 2002, defect to the SP in 2003, thereby contributing to the fall of the BSP government that year. Chamars in my fieldwork villages argued that defections were harder to stomach than other costs, since they violated the very logic of electing non-*bahujan* candidates, which was to have the BSP rule.[41]

The BSP's non-*bahujan* candidates have, also, occasionally resorted to communal (ie. Hindu-Muslim) mobilization in order to win elections in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Azamgarh parliamentary constituency has been especially prone to such mobilization ; both Akbar Ahmed "Dumpy," the BSP candidate from Azamgarh in the 1998 and 1999 parliamentary elections, and the by-election held in 2008, and Ramakant Yadav, the candidate in the 2004 parliamentary elections, sought

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[40] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Dehri.
[41] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Dehri, Bashi and Dumri.

to build winning coalitions here by hardening religious identities.[42] Ramakant Yadav was campaigning in Azamgarh prior to the 2004 elections when a fight broke out between Muslims and Khatiks in Saraimir market. Yadav, sensing a golden opportunity, arrived in Saraimir promptly, and delivered a speech, where he unleashed a tirade against Muslims, and vowed to "make Saraimir safe for Hindus again." The speech achieved exactly the purpose it was intended to achieve, ie. draw those Hindutva voters who usually supported the BJP, but who were dismayed by the BJP's choice of candidate in 2004 (a Muslim by the name of Shah Mohammed), into Yadav's camp. Coming on top of the Chamar votes that were his, by virtue of being a BSP candidate, and the Yadav votes that were delivered to him by his coethnics in the constituency, these extra votes drawn from the BJP's kitty proved enough to propel Yadav to victory.[43]

While the Hindu coalition sought to be forged by Ramakant Yadav was inclusive of Chamars, Akbar Ahmed "Dumpy," on the other hand, mobilized Muslims in Azamgarh by casting Chamars as the main pillar of the Hindu opposition.[44] A Chamar cadre in Baraipar, recalling a pre-election rally "Dumpy" held in Saraimir in 1999, had the following to say :

We Chamars simply could not stand there listening to him. It was too insulting. We were afraid our anger would show, so we left the meeting. We had to keep reminding ourselves that this was the BSP candidate, and that we should not say anything against him in public. He was pleasing the Muslims, telling them he would turn Azamgarh into Pakistan. He said he was going to show Hindus their place, and that he was not going to pander to us Chamars, that we had no option but to vote for him anyway. He called us dogs, and said we had no dignity, that we go running to people who throw us food. When I came back to the village, I was crying, from anger and shame. My wife told me to think of Behenji. She said, "We have to vote for the party, we have to do it for her." [45]

Communal rhetoric, like that cited above, is dangerous in a place like Azamgarh, where the Hindu-Muslim divide also approximates a class divide, with Muslims dominating the ranks of the landed, and Hindus, specifically Chamars, forming the bulk of the agricultural labour force. In allowing its candidates to get

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[42] Ramakant Yadav won the Azamgarh seat in 2004, but was expelled from the BSP in 2008. In the by-election held in Azamgarh in 2008, the BSP emerged victorious once again, with Akbar Ahmed "Dumpy" as its candidate.
[43] Interviews with BSP cadres in Saraimir.
[44] Interviews with BSP cadres in Baraipar and Saraimir.
[45] Interview, July 30, 2004, Baraipar.

away with this kind of politicking, the BSP thus ran the risk of igniting communal passions, and inciting communal riots. In any case, it is to the credit of Chamars that they did not rise to the bait, and if the BSP indeed judged the risks to have been well worth the electoral benefits, it was proved right, for "Dumpy" won the Azamgarh seat two out of the three times that he ran (ie. in 1998 and 2008). Being a Pathan (ie. forward Muslim), he cobbled together a Muslim coalition dominated by Pathans and Sheikhs, and benefitted, furthermore, from the Chamar vote. Chamars in Azamgarh, in voting for him thrice, overlooked a great many slights : his passing them over in the distribution of patronage, his interference with the administration of the SC/ST Act, his intimidation of BSP personnel, and his humiliating them in public fora on more than one occasion. Azamgarh constituted, in this sense, the litmus test of Chamar loyalty to the BSP.[46]

I have argued in Chapter 4 that the presence of Chamars within the party organization has failed to offset the costs of non-*bahujan* nominations in Western Uttar Pradesh, with Chamars having to make way for other communities within the party structure as well. This last has been true of the East also ; thus, only 3 of the 20 sector secretaries in Jaunpur constituency were Chamars, at the time of fieldwork. Of the remaining 17, 4 were Brahmins, 4 were Yadavs, 2 were Kurmis, 2 were Mauryas, 2 were Nishads, and 3 were Muslim backwards. In Saraimir, there were 5 Chamars amongst the 20 sector secretaries ; the other 15 comprised 3 Muslim forwards, 1 Baniya, 4 Yadavs, 5 Rajbhars, 1 Pasi and 1 Khatik. The Jaunpur Vidhan Sabha Committee was made up, over and above the sector secretaries, of a President, who was a Chamar, a General Secretary, who was a backward Muslim, and a Coordinator, who was a Brahmin. The Saraimir Vidhan Sabha Committe had the same structure ; here, the President was a Chamar, the General Secretary a Rajbhar, and the Coordinator a Muslim forward.[47]

As in the West, it was the Coordinator of the Vidhan Sabha Committee who represented the state assembly constituency in the District Committee. The District Committee thus comprised the coordinators of the state assembly constituencies

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[46] Interviews with BSP cadres in Baraipar and Saraimir.
[47] Interviews with the Presidents of the Jaunpur and Saraimir Vidhan Sabha Committees, Jaunpur and Saraimir, June 3 and July 13, 2004, respectively.

falling within the district, as well as a President, a Vice-President, a General Secretary and a Treasurer. A Chamar presided over the District Committee in both Jaunpur and Azamgarh. The Vice-President of the Jaunpur District Committee was a Muslim backward, the General Secretary a Yadav, and the Treasurer a Kurmi. A Yadav, a Rajbhar, and a Muslim forward was the Vice-President, General Secretary and Treasurer, of the Azamgarh District Committee, respectively.[48]

However, the accommodation of non-Chamars within the party organization has not deprived Chamars of patronage in the East, to the same extent as it has in the West. This is because non-Chamar *bahujan* officials in the party have channelled patronage resources to Chamars, as well as to coethnics.[49] It has also helped that the BSP has been careful while inducting upper castes into the party organization ; the conspicuous absence of Thakurs from positions of responsibility testifies to efforts to prevent viciously self-seeking elements from gaining a foothold within the party structure.[50] Chamars have, thus, done a lot better on the whole vis-à-vis the party organization in the East, though the largesse of party officials has hardly made up for the humiliation they have suffered at the hands of legislators.

To conclude this section on the burdens borne by Chamars in non-reserved constituencies, while Chamars in the East, like those in the West, have paid a heavy price to see the BSP in power, their attitudes towards the sacrifices entailed by non-*bahujan* nominations have been very different. The tone they struck was much less accusatory, and there was a greater tendency to see these costs as something that had to be borne in a spirit of willing sacrifice, for the larger good of the *bahujan samaj*.[51] The term "mission," invoked often by BAMCEF officials in Western Uttar Pradesh, to refer to the long-term goal of *bahujan* unity that made upper caste nominations necessary, was thus used in the East, not just by senior and middle- level BSP personnel, but also by grassroots cadres and voters. Chamars in the East thus saw non-*bahujan* nominations in a different light – not merely as an instrument of

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[48] Interviews with the Presidents of the Jaunpur and Azamgarh District Committees, Jaunpur and Azamgarh, June 6 and August 12, 2004, respectively.
[49] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Baraipar, Thara and Saraimir.
[50] Interview with the President of the Jaunpur District Committee, Jaunpur, June 6, 2004.
[51] Interviews with Chamar respondents and BSP cadres in fieldwork villages.

government formation, and subaltern empowerment, but also as a means of forging the *bahujan samaj*. [52] They were thus much more in sync with the BSP's founding agenda than Chamars in the West, where this constituency, having no sense of being part of a larger movement, saw sacrifices as much more burdensome.

The Situation in Reserved Constituencies

Coming to the reserved constituencies in Jaunpur and Azamgarh, the BSP has nominated only Chamars here, like in the West. However, while the BSP lost all the reserved seats in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar prior to the 2007 elections (with the sole exception of Charthawal, which it won in 2002), it won each of the 5 reserved seats in Jaunpur and Azamgarh, at least once, prior to 2007. Its electoral record in Shahganj and Kerakat, the 2 reserved constituencies in Jaunpur, are as follows : it won both constituencies in 1993, and Kerakat again, in 2007. In Azamgarh, which has 3 reserved seats, Saraimir, Mohammedabad-Gohna, and Mehnagar, it won Saraimir in 1989, 1993, 1996 and 2002, Mohammedabad-Gohna in 1989,1993, and 2007, and Mehnagar in 2002 and 2007. When I conducted fieldwork in 2003-2004, therefore, Jaunpur and Azamgarh offered better opportunities for studying the interactions between Chamar constituents and Chamar legislators than my two fieldwork districts in the West. Saraimir, my fieldsite in Azamgarh, provided an especially fertile ground for such an investigation, the BSP having emerged the most successful, amongst all 5 constituencies, here.[53]

Table 5.17 : Names and Caste Background of Candidates Nominated by the BSP in Saraimir State Assembly Constituency, Azamgarh District (1989-2007)

	1989 State Assembly Elections	1991 State Assembly Elections	1993 State Assembly Elections	1996 State Assembly Elections	2002 State Assembly Elections	2007 State Assembly Elections
Saraimir (Reserved Constituency)	DayaRam Bhaskar : Chamar (SC)	DayaRam Bhaskar : Chamar (SC)	Samayee Ram : Chamar (SC)	Hiralal Gautam : Chamar (SC)	Hiralal Gautam : Chamar (SC)	Hiralal Gautam : Chamar (SC)

Source : BSP, Azamgarh District Unit.

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[52] Interviews with Chamar respondents and BSP cadres in fieldwork villages.
[53] Election Commission of India.

The BSP has nominated only Chamars in Saraimir, winning the seat four times, ie. in 1989, 1993, 1996 and 2002. While it would be reasonable to assume that having Chamar MLAs has brought a steady flow of patronage the way of the Chamar constituency, my interviews with Chamar respondents suggested otherwise. Only rarely do SCs, leave aside Chamars by themselves, make up the majority in reserved seats in Uttar Pradesh. This means that candidates usually need support from a wider coalition to win here, Saraimir being no exception. This in turn requires SC MLAs to cater to a broad range of constituents, ranging across caste, in reserved seats ; this not only allows them to reward voters for their support, but also helps facilitate victory the second time around.[54]

Hiralal Gautam, the incumbent MLA, had indeed catered to constituencies across caste. He had funded the construction of cemetery walls in Muslim villages, awarded lucrative government contracts in construction and transportation to Yadavs, Thakurs, and Chamars, and in improving infrastructure (electricity, roads, and drains), also worked to develop the constituency as a whole. Chamars had certainly not been the sole recipients of patronage during his time in office, but they had received a decent enough share of the pie. My Chamar respondents further pointed out that Gautam had evolved techniques that allowed him to appear neutral between different communities, when fights broke out in the constituency that pitted Chamars against others. He never rooted for Chamars in public, but worked quietly behind the scenes to address their complaints.[55]

But there were other instances where Chamars were completely ignored by MLAs from their own caste. In these latter cases, there was little to distinguish reserved seats from non-reserved seats, in terms of Chamar-legislator relations. Thus, Dayaram Bhaskar and Samayee Ram, the BSP candidates who won from Saraimir in the 1989 and 1993 elections, were both dismissed by Chamar voters as "useless." Samayee Ram "would not let Chamars go anywhere near him," as a Chamar labourer in Baraipar put it.[56] The list did not stop at MLAs, but extended to MPs as well. Dr.

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[54] Interview with Hiralal Gautam, who was the Saraimir MLA at the time of fieldwork, August 12, 2004, Azamgarh.

[55] Interviews with Chamar respondents in Baraipar, Thara and Saraimir.

[56] Interview, August 6, 2004, Baraipar.

Baliram, a two-time Chamar MP from Lalganj,[57] a reserved parliamentary seat bordering Azamgarh parliamentary constituency, held a record similar to Samayee's ; he had worked only for Thakurs, a numerically significant constituency, taking the Chamar vote in Lalganj totally for granted.[58] A BSP cadre in Saraimir, describing an encounter with him, had the following to say :

This was after the 1999 elections…he [Dr. Baliram] had just won from Lalganj. He was visiting Saraimir … so we workers organized a welcome for him, and took him to Nate's garage. [Nate was a mechanic, whose garage served as the BSP's district headquarters in Saramir.] We had bought sweets, there was to be a celebration. But when he saw the garage, he said, "What is this? Why have you brought me to this dirty little shanty?"[59]

Thus, we would be mistaken to assume that Chamar legislators automatically favour Chamar constituents over those from other castes. As a senior BSP official pointed out, Chamars who have "made it" in politics are often reluctant to attend to backward sections of their communities, preferring to cater to, and associate with, upper castes instead. As he put it, "upper caste politicians do a far better job of looking after the poor among their own people, than politicians from our community."[60]

3.2. THE BSP AND NON-CHAMAR BAHUJANS

In this section, I discuss the BSP's relationship with its non-Chamar *bahujan* constituencies, ie. non-Chamar SCs, and Hindu and Muslim backwards. Non-Chamar *bahujans* have certainly fared better than Chamars when it has come to coethnic nominations, thus deriving greater symbolic representation, as well as patronage, from the election of BSP candidates. While 22 of the 24 *bahujan* nominations made in non-reserved seats in Jaunpur and Azamgarh in the pre-1998 phase went to non-Chamars, they received all five tickets awarded to *bahujans* here, in the 1998-2007 period. And whereas the BSP has nominated Chamars alone in reserved seats in these districts, Chamar legislators, where they have attended to *bahujan* constituencies at all, have secured benefits not only for Chamars, but also for

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[57] Dr. Baliram won from Lalganj in the 1996 and 1999 parliamentary elections. He was nominated by the BSP from Lalganj in 1989, 1998 and 2004 as well, but lost.
[58] Interviews with BSP cadres in Saraimir.
[59] Interview, August 3, 2004, Saraimir.
[60] Interview, July 23, 2004, Azamgarh.

other *bahujans*.[61] In this sense, subaltern voters in Eastern Uttar Pradesh have lost out less on patronage than in the West, where *bahujan* MLAs have catered to their immediate caste constituencies, rather than to subalterns as a whole.

The BSP has also secured programmatic benefits for non-Chamar subalterns. In the East, the most significant programmatic effort has occurred in the realm of land ; the BSP's distribution and enforcement drive has benefitted a substantial number of lower backwards, who have witnessed firsthand the obstacles faced, and sacrifices made, by cadres as they have aided the party's efforts. As the Prajapatis in Baraipar pointed out, "it is not only for Chamars, but also for us, that they have fought." [62]

It has also helped that Chamars active in *panchayat* politics in the East have not discriminated amongst SCs in the distribution of programme benefits. Chamars in Jaunpur and Saraimir did not think of themselves as constituting a special constituency in any sense, or as being more entitled than other *bahujans* to the gains of BSP rule. Their relationship with the party has been much less possessive and grasping, than in the West, which has in turn facilitated an easy identification between non-Chamar subalterns and the BSP.

I have described the BSP's effort to court the Muslim constituency in Chapter 4, and argued that the party's secularist stance has been an important pillar thereof. In Western Uttar Pradesh, however, the communal politics of grassroots cadres has compromised the secular policies adopted by the party at the level of the state. The situation has been a little different in the East ; here, it is not BSP cadres, but BSP candidates, whose politics has been at odds with the leadership's secular position. Candidates such as Akbar Ahmed "Dumpy" and Ramakant Yadav have adopted blatantly communal postures to forge winning coalitions in Azamgarh. However, in so far as BSP cadres have overlooked "Dumpy"'s portrayal of Chamars as the "diabolic Hindu other," in a context where his victory has depended on Chamar votes, and where Muslim landowners have continued to oppress Chamar agricultural labour, they have shown themselves to be of a far greater secular

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[61] BSP cadres in Saraimir pointed out that this was true not only of Hiralal Gautam, who was the BSP MLA in Saraimir at the time of fieldwork, but also of Vidya Chowdhury, the BSP MLA in Mehnagar, another reserved constituency in Azamgarh district.

[62] Interviews with Prajapati respondents in Baraipar.

temperament than their counterparts in the West. For the latter have adopted anti-Muslim attitudes in the face of far less provocation, in a situation where the Chamar-Muslim divide has not taken on a class dimension, the way it has in the East. In other words, if the BSP has continued to be seen as a secular party by backward Muslims in the East, notwithstanding the rhetoric of its candidates, it is in large part on account of the restraint shown by Chamar cadres in the face of that rhetoric.

The attitudes of Chamars have, thus, facilitated the BSP's efforts to reach out to *bahujans* at large, and widen its subaltern base in the East. Poorer sections of lower backwards, and non-Chamar SCs have delivered the BSP a committed vote in Jaunpur and Saraimir, unlike in the West, where their support has remained conditional on coethnic nominations. This suggests that the BSP's base in the East has taken on more of a class character than in the West ; it has comprised poorer voters from *bahujan* castes, with the exception of Chamars, who have voted for the party en bloc.

The voting behaviour of Muslim backwards specifically has, however, been a little more complicated. BSP cadres in Saraimir emphasized that the party received very few Muslim votes in the constituency [63]; when interviewed, Muslim respondents from backward castes pointed out that pressure from forward Muslims made it difficult for them to support the BSP. This was especially true of villages where Muslims were in a majority ; the physical and social distance between Hindus and Muslims tended to be greater, and the boundaries between the two groups policed more forcefully, here. Hindu-majority villages, in contrast, allowed for more interaction between Hindus and Muslims from lower castes ; surveillance by forward Muslims was also weaker in these villages, allowing backward Muslims to vote for parties other than the SP.[64]

3.3. THE BSP AND NON-BAHUJAN CONSTITUENCIES

I discuss the BSP's relationship with its third and last constituency, ie. non-*bahujan* castes, in this section. In the East, this constituency has comprised mainly

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[63] Interviews with BSP cadres in Saraimir.
[64] Interviews with backward Muslim respondents in Baraipar, Sakatpur and Thara.

Brahmins and Thakurs, and to a lesser extent, upper backwards, such as Yadavs and Kurmis. Thakurs, whom the BSP's policies have alienated the most, have shunned the party on the whole ; when they have sought it out, it has been primarily with the aim of using it for their own purposes, and getting even, in a way. This is certainly the perception of Thakurs that has prevailed amongst BSP cadres on the ground, and with good reason. For there have a good number of defectors amongst Thakur MLAs, besides which Thakurs have used their status as party members to shield coethnics from the repercussions of crimes committed against *bahujans*. It is not surprising, therefore, that the BSP has favoured Brahmins over Thakurs when distributing tickets, particularly in the 2002 and 2007 state assembly elections.

It may be instructive to recall the sequence of events that has led Brahmins to turn to the BSP. The three BSP-BJP alliances in Uttar Pradesh have done the BJP no small amount of harm ; Mayawati's pro-*bahujan* policies, not to mention the Raja Bhaiyya episode, have made it difficult for the BJP to face its upper caste base, who have found it incomprehensible that it should have failed to protect their interests, while being part of the ruling coalition. Thakurs, in particular, have felt let down by the party, and crossed over to the SP as a result. This has left the BJP with an emaciated base, and slim prospects of electoral success, leading Brahmins in turn to abandon it. Brahmin-Thakur rivalry has ruled out the SP as a choice for Brahmins ; the Congress being more or less on the wane, the BSP has emerged as the only option. The BSP has made full use of this opportunity, and welcomed Brahmins aboard ; the party's unwavering Chamar support base has, further, served to persuade political aspirants amongst Brahmins of the likelihood of electoral victory, pending nomination.[65]

My fieldwork in Azamgarh following the 2004 parliamentary elections pointed to yet another phenomenon, ie. the movement of Yadavs, an upper backward caste, from the SP to the BSP in pockets of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. The

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[65] The BSP's committed Chamar base has, indeed, been a selling point, and a definite factor taken into consideration by non-*bahujan*s when they have considered joining the party, and running on BSP tickets. Thus, one Brahmin respondent in Dehri referred to this Chamar support as "insurance," that mitigated the risks of joining a lower caste party, and that more or less guaranteed the candidate a fair chance of victory, which was important, given that the BSP required most non-*bahujan* candidates to finance their own campaigns. This support, in other words, made the financial and political risks involved worth taking. Interview, May 30, 2004, Dehri.

SP has traditionally been a party of Yadavs and Muslims ; the former have supported the party largely on account of its leader, Mulayam Singh, being a Yadav himself. However, the movement of Thakurs to the SP, and their accommodation there, served to set off a Yadav revolt ; Yadavs perceived Amar Singh, a Thakur, and the second-in command in the SP after Mulayam, as promoting his coethnics, at the cost of people from their community. My Yadav respondents in Saraimir complained that Yadavs had been overlooked in favour of Thakurs when it had come to the SP's appointing MLCs ; thus, RamPyare Singh, a Thakur newcomer to the party, had been made a MLC by Amar Singh, leaving a five-time MLA like Durga Yadav watching from the sidelines. Yet another Thakur MLC from the SP, Jaswant Singh, was believed to have been nominated on account of the growing influence of Raja Bhaiyya within the party ; Raja Bhaiyya, who had attracted a lot of Thakurs to the SP, was understood as exercising a good amount of clout within it of late.[66]

These developments led five prominent Yadav politicians from Eastern Uttar Pradesh to leave the SP prior to the 2004 parliamentary elections ; all five were given tickets by the BSP, and won from their seats. They were, namely, Ramakant Yadav, Umakant Yadav, Balchandra Yadav, Kailashnath Yadav, and Mitrasen Yadav, who contested from Azamgarh, Macchlishahr, Khalilabad, Chandauli, and Faizabad constituencies respectively. This served to bring the BSP its highest ever tally of Yadav MPs, and drew attention once more to the bizarre chain of events that the BJP's demise, itself the handiwork of the BSP, had set in motion in the state. For it was not merely the alienation of Yadav politicians from the SP that brought forth this result ; their victories would not have been possible without the support of Yadav voters, which led to the forging of winning Yadav-*bahujan* combinations on the ground.[67]

Non-*bahujan* nominations, over and above helping propel the BSP into power, has also helped liberate the SC franchise, like in the West. There were large pockets in the East where SCs and lower backwards had been prevented by Thakurs, Yadavs and forward Muslims from casting their vote till the mid-1990s. Thakurs, in particular, had used their clout with the local administration to instal polling booths

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[66] Interviews with Yadav respondents in Dehri, Dumri, and Sakatpur.
[67] Interviews with BSP cadres in Azamgarh.

in their own part of the village, which allowed them to dictate voting choice to lower caste voters, and sometimes even stamp their ballot papers before they arrived at the booth. With upper castes and upper backwards running on BSP tickets, however, this dynamic was reversed to a good extent ; now, it was common to see these same communities facilitate the SC vote, and use their old tactics to prevent supporters of the rival party from exercising their franchise.[68] A Brahmin youth I interviewed in Dehri thus confessed to have done some bogus voting on behalf of the BSP in the 2004 parliamentary elections, when the BSP had nominated a Brahmin candidate, OmPrakash Dube, in Jaunpur. He also described the Brahmin-Thakur clash that had occurred in the village on polling day, as Brahmins had attempted to prevent Thakurs from booth-capturing [69]– it was, he said, the first of its kind, since both communities had supported the same party, ie. the BJP, till now.[70]

The BSP also made sure that its non-*bahujan* candidates commanded the necessary resources and clout to monitor the constituency on polling day, and if need be, take appropriate action against the malpractices of the opposition. As BSP cadres repeatedly pointed out, the BSP had yet to face elections at a time when the party was itself in government. As such, it always faced a hostile environment on election day, with the ruling party enjoying a decided advantage ; the latter's decisions about how and where to employ the state police were always calculated to give its own people a free rein at the booths, and make things difficult for the opposition.[71] Given this context, it was crucial that BSP candidates were able to hold their own when things went wrong. The BSP usually awarded its tickets "wisely" ; thus, Akbar Ahmed "Dumpy," the BSP candidate from Azamgarh in 1998, succeeded in getting a repolling order issued, following mischief at a booth in Jagdishpur village that year. Ramakant Yadav, himself a man with a criminal past, was likewise effective in

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[68] Interviews with BSP cadres in Jaunpur and Saraimir constituencies.

[69] It might be instructive to distinguish between two electoral malpractices common in India : booth-capturing and bogus-voting. Bogus voting occurs when dead and absent voters have ballots cast on their behalf. Booth capturing, on the other hand, occurs when voters at the polling booth are prevented from casting their votes, and have their ballots stamped, in effect, by third parties, in favour of candidates whom they do not support.

[70] Interview, June 14, 2004, Dehri.

[71] The 2007 state assembly elections were an exception ; the BSP won a majority in Uttar Pradesh in 2007 despite the SP being in power at the time. This is, in large part, on account of the Election Commission's decision to deploy the Central Para-Military Forces, rather than the state police, during the polling process. See Atiq Khan, "163 Tainted Candidates in Final Phase of UP Polls," *Hindu*, May 8, 2007.

preventing booth-capturing in Kamalpur, Surahi Khurd and Karauli Buzurg, in 2004, when he contested from Azamgarh on a BSP ticket.[72]

In one important sense, however, the BSP has benefitted far less from non-*bahujan* constituencies in the East, than in the West. In Western Uttar Pradesh, Jats, and to a lesser extent, Gujjars, have struck deals with BSP cadres at the village level, whereby the latter have promised them Chamar support in *panchayat* polls, provided they, upon election, allowed for a free exercise of the Chamar franchise during assembly and parliamentary elections. Such deals between Chamars and upper castes have not been forthcoming in the East ; here, the arrogance associated with a rigid caste ideology has prevented Brahmins and Thakurs from approaching lower castes for help. It is through force instead that upper castes have sought to win *panchayat* elections in Eastern Uttar Pradesh ; in villages that have no *panchayat* reservations, it has been common for Brahmins, and especially Thakurs, to threaten both SCs and lower backwards with dire consequences if they did not step down, and withdraw their nominations.[73]

In this sense, the liberation of the *bahujan* franchise has only been half-complete in the East ; it has depended solely on the nomination of non-*bahujan* candidates, and remained unsupported by contracts between *bahujan* and non-*bahujan* communities at the grassroots. This, in effect, has meant that *bahujans* have been able to cast their vote in those instances where upper castes, or upper backwards, have received BSP tickets, but not otherwise. The struggle for the franchise has also been more violent in the East for this reason ; in the absence of mutually beneficial bargains to pave the way, attempts by subalterns to exercise their vote has threatened upper caste dominance, and frequently met with brutal repression.

3.4. THE BSP AND THE ASYMMETRIC REPRESENTATION OF CONSTITUENCIES

Like in the West, the BSP in Eastern Uttar Pradesh has used its non-*bahujan* constituency as an instrument for capturing power. It has offered upper castes and upper backwards the opportunity to vote coethnic MLAs into office ; these MLAs

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[72] Interviews with BSP cadres in Azamgarh.
[73] Interviews with BSP cadres in Dehri, Dumri, Dadra and Jaunpur.

have in turn provided the party the numbers necessary for government formation. But the only benefits non-*bahujans* have received from the BSP are symbolic benefits, accruing from coethnic representation, and patronage secured for them by their coethnic legislators. They have not benefitted from any of the BSP's policies, which have been engineered to cater to *bahujans* alone. As to why non-*bahujans* have put up with this arrangement, the answer points to the representation vacuum that upper castes in particular have faced, following the demise of first, the Congress, and then, the BJP, the two parties that have catered to this constituency in the state. They have had few other options but to join the SP and the BSP, parties traditionally catering to backwards and SCs, respectively. To what extent upper castes will succeed in wresting control of decision-making within the SP still remains to be seen ; the BSP, however, has been careful to mark out policy-making as a Chamar preserve, even while accommodating non-*bahujans* within its legislative, and to a lesser extent, organizational, wing.

Government formation, for the BSP, has been a means to still another end, namely, the empowerment of *bahujan* communities, and subsequently, the forging of the *bahujan samaj*. The reasoning has been that the policy benefits secured for subalterns by the party would persuade the uncommitted amongst them to deliver it a committed vote, thereby binding all *bahujans* into one political constituency. This goal, once accomplished, would make non-*bahujan* nominations unnecessary, and allow the party to pursue its agenda of *bahujan* empowerment unhindered. The BSP has thus treated its constituencies asymmetrically, not only in the sense of offering them each a different mix of benefits, but also of discriminating amongst them. For non-*bahujans*, in the BSP's scheme, have served only as an instrument for binding its two other constituencies together ; they have, thus, been conceived as having no intrinsic worth of their own.

4. The BSP, and the Problem of Embeddedness

I have described the BSP's organizational depth in Chapter 4, and argued that the ubiquitousness of the Chamar presence in the state, combined with their close ties to the BSP, has allowed the party to penetrate the countryside like no other. But

the BSP's Chamar roots have given rise to quite different consequences in the East, than in the West.

Chamar embeddedness has not turned out to be a liability for the BSP in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, as it has in the West. In Hastinapur and Morna, Chamar-dominant *panchayats* favoured Chamars over other SCs in the distribution of AVP benefits. Since most Chamars active in *panchayat* politics were BSP cadres, this served to alienate non-Chamar SCs from the BSP, and misrepresent it as a party with a narrow Chamar agenda. Chamars have been far less successful in establishing de facto dominance in SC-majority *panchayats* in the East. However, in cases where they have succeeded, they have allocated benefits equitably between Chamars and other SCs. This is one reason, amongst others, why non-Chamar SCs have identified with the BSP quite as closely as Chamars, with the poorer sections amongst them delivering the party a committed vote. In the West, in contrast, they have only voted for the BSP when it has nominated coethnics.

In Morna, furthermore, Chamars have retaliated against lower backwards for the slights inflicted on them by a Saini, ie. lower backward, MLA. Chamars in Dalki, my fieldwork village in Morna, thus rallied behind a Gujjar, ie. upper backward, candidate for the post of *pradhan* during the *panchayat* elections in 2001, contributing thereby to the defeat of a Gadariya, ie. lower backward, who was also incidentally, a committed BSP cadre. The situation has been very different in the East ; here, Chamars have used their numbers on the ground to support the political ambitions of lower backwards. Thus, Saramir and Phulpur assembly constituencies in Azamgarh district have seen Rajbhar *pradhans* emerge victorious in a number of villages, having been voted to power by Chamars, as well as other *bahujans*.[74]

Chamar-Muslim relations have also taken on different contours in Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh. Chamars in Morna have frequently resorted to communal politics, protesting against the construction of cemetery walls, and participating actively in anti-Muslim riots. But the rationale for Chamars to engage in communal mobilization has been far stronger in Saraimir. The vast majority of the Chamar poor here remain engaged as agricultural labour on farms owned by forward Muslims ; the Chamar-Muslim dichotomy here corresponds to a class division,

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[74] Interviews with BSP cadres in Saraimir and Azamgarh.

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unlike in Morna, where Muslims form a small percentage of landowners, and Chamars remain engaged in the non-agrarian sector. But the temptation notwithstanding, Chamar labour in Saraimir have refrained from mobilizing against Muslims. They have, admirably, even voted for Akbar Ahmed "Dumpy," each time he has contested from Azamgarh parliamentary constituency on a BSP ticket, despite his efforts to mobilize Muslims there by painting Chamars as the main pillar of the Hindu opposition.

I have argued in Chapter 4 that the strength of party-society ties alone do not determine whether or not party politics have democratic outcomes ; the conceptions of community prevailing below matter as well. The BSP remains closely tied to Chamars in both East and West ; however, the consequences of these ties for democracy have been very different in the two regions. Chamars in Western Uttar Pradesh have related to the BSP in a proprietary way ; they have seen themselves as constituting not only its original, but also its most privileged constituency, and as being more entitled than others to the benefits of BSP rule. This perception has been supported by a narrow understanding of subaltern community, itself a result of the greater economic mobility experienced by Chamars in the West, relative to other *bahujans*.[75] The shared failure of Chamars and other subalterns to move out of the agricultural sector in the East have, in contrast, made for a common plebeian identity. The BSP's agenda in the East has, thus, come to be seen by Chamars as one in which all *bahujans* have equal stakes, and in whose benefits and burdens they partake equally. It is not the extent of the BSP's ties to Chamars then, but the content of Chamar solidarities themselves, that have accounted for the different intra-*bahujan* dynamics in Eastern and Western Uttar Pradesh. These solidarities have been more inclusive in the East, consequently bringing the *bahujan* project to better fruition here.

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[75] As I have argued in Chapter 4, the upward mobility experienced by Chamars in the West, has itself been a consequence of the faster pace of industrialization here, relative to the East. It has also been, in part, a result of the reservations-oriented political mobilization of the 1920s and 1930s, which made for an emphasis on education as a path to economic progress. The East, in contrast, experienced a lag in industrialization ; it also experienced decades of left struggle that left behind a legacy of politics oriented around land, and economic justice, rather than quotas, and economic mobility.

6

Conclusion

This chapter comprises three sections. The first section summarizes the arguments of the study. The second section outlines the BSP's politics in the post-2004 period, and reflects on how these recent developments affect the arguments made here. The third section discusses how this thesis points the way to future research, and identifies three directions of enquiry. Drawing on analogous empirical cases, it argues that the feasibility of these research agendas is supported by more than the BSP's politics alone.

1. Summary of Arguments

Using the BSP, a low caste party in the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh as a case study, this dissertation explores the following questions : (1) what motivates the ethnic poor to vote for ethnic parties? and (2) what consequences do ethnic parties have for democracy?

Psychological theories of ethnic voting argue that the ethnic poor derive symbolic benefits from the material ascendancy that ethnic parties secure for coethnic elites. These theories see the ethnic poor as supporting ethnic parties on the basis of such symbolic empowerment alone. But the poorer sections of the BSP's low caste base vote for the party primarily for material reasons. The BSP, furthermore, secures programmatic benefits for its low caste voters, a finding which contravenes the conventional understanding that ethnic parties, particularly those operating in developing contexts, mobilize only on the basis of patronage.

The poorer of the BSP's low caste voters, moreover, do not support the party for material benefits delivered in the past ; their support rests on expectations of future benefits instead. This support remains grounded in trust in the BSP's

commitment to their material empowerment, engendered through their firsthand experience of past party rule. "Elite manipulation" perspectives, that interpret mass participation in ethnic politics in terms of the self-interested manipulation of the ethnic poor by ethnic elites, dismiss such trust as emotion or unthinking belief. But trust is not an unthinking phenomenon ; it is rather a rational and cognitive one, that ensues upon an understanding of something, or someone, as trustworthy. The low caste poor's trust rests on their knowledge of the BSP ; support arising from that trust cannot, therefore, count as manipulation.

The BSP's programmatic politics has depended on its participation in government ; the BSP, has secured this last end by widening its base beyond subalterns alone. But the party has relied on patronage to mobilize non-subaltern constituencies, while securing programmatic benefits for its subaltern voters. The BSP has thus represented its constituencies asymmetrically, offering each a different mix of benefits, and using one to empower the other. Such asymmetric representation has helped the party pursue its ambitious redistributive goals.

While the BSP has helped empower the low caste poor in both Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, the benefits of BSP rule have reached a wider swathe of subalterns in the East. The BSP has been equally tied to the Chamar caste, its core constituency, in both parts of the state. But, Chamars have facilitated the party's efforts to widen its subaltern base in the East, and obstructed these efforts in the West. This variation has arisen because Chamars have embraced broad and diffuse notions of subaltern community in Eastern Uttar Pradesh., but narrow and parochial visions in the West. This study thus takes issue with the view that strong party-society ties, ipso facto, facilitate a democratic politics. Drawing on the BSP's experience with its Chamar constituency, it argues that the breadth of visions of community prevailing at the party's base are crucial too.

2. The BSP Beyond 2004

I have argued that the Chamar poor vote for the BSP on the basis of expectations that it will deliver the goods once it is able to form a majority government. The BSP did capture a majority in the 2007 state assembly elections, three years after I completed fieldwork. While courting non-*bahujan* communities

across the spectrum, it was the Brahmin vote the BSP pursued most aggressively that year, a strategy clearly designed to propel the BSP into the vacuum left by the demise of the Congress and the BJP, the two parties previously catering to upper castes in the state. The movement of Thakurs, the BJP's other upper caste constituency, towards the SP, and their accommodation there, provided the BSP still further room to appeal to Brahmins ; with Brahmin-Thakur rivalry ruling out the SP as an option for the Brahmin community, the BSP was well-poised to capture the Brahmin vote. The BSP's mobilization of Brahmin support also marked what could well be the beginning of the transformation of the party system in Uttar Pradesh, in that the three-cornered contests of the last fifteen years, involving the SP, BJP and BSP, were replaced in 2007 by fights pitting the BSP and SP against each other.

These developments have some implications for the arguments advanced here. I posit that the BSP has resorted to upper caste nominations in order to win power, and that it has seen power, furthermore, as a tool for the empowerment of *bahujan*s. This suggests that now that the BSP has captured a majority, and no longer has allies obstructing its subaltern agenda, it should be delivering substantial policy gains to *bahujan* voters. Given the turn towards a two-party system, however, there is a chance that the BSP might consolidate its position as a representative vehicle for Brahmins in the coming years. Such an eventuality, however, could well lead Brahmins to demand policy benefits of the party. The question thus arises : could the BSP secure policy empowerment for Brahmins without alienating *bahujan*s, and in particular, Chamars?

While it is too early to provide a definitive answer, we should note that the BSP has managed to pull off this feat in the realm of quotas : the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiative, pushed by the government's New Economic Policy in 2007, has sought to provide special benefits to private sector enterprises, requiring in return that they reserve 30 percent of jobs –10 percent for SCs, 10 percent for OBCs and Muslims, and 10 percent for poor upper castes.[1] The PPP, which represents the first attempt by any state government to introduce quotas in the private sector, not only expands the pool of jobs already available to *bahujan* communities in

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[1] Atiq Khan, "PPP Projects to have Job Quotas in Uttar Pradesh," *The Hindu,* December 25, 2007.

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government, but also introduces job reservations for the backward amongst upper castes, for the first time.

The BSP's strategy of nominating Brahmins further suggests that the party remains resolved not to lose sight of it *bahujan* agenda. For accommodating Brahmins in the party hurts subalterns much less than accommodating Thakurs. It is Thakurs, more than Brahmins, who employ Chamar agricultural labour, and with whom the latter clash in the countryside ; it is, again, Thakurs who have suffered as the BSP has empowered the SC landless, and cracked down on the forcible occupation of *gaon sabha* plots. In other words, because the BSP's subaltern agenda costs Brahmins less, they are less likely to object to that agenda.

3. Directions for Research :

This section lays out three lines of enquiry suggested by this thesis. It refers to analogous cases where possible, and demonstrates that these research agendas are supported by politics other than that of the BSP's alone.

3.1. ETHNIC POLITICS AND ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY

That ethnic politics threatens democracy has been well established. Ethnic mobilization has been known to encourage the formation of permanent majorities, the exclusion of ethnic minorities, shrink political competition, and facilitate ethnic violence. But recent research on the link between ethnic parties and democratic stability demonstrates that crosscutting cleavage structures, when institutionalized, are likely to moderate ethnic outbidding, and reduce the likelihood of extreme ethnic claims.[2] Kanchan Chandra, seeking to explain "the anomalous case of ethnic party behavior in India," where ethnic parties have typically moved from "an initial spiral of outbidding …to centrist behavior," argues that it is the "multidimensionality of ethnic identities," provided institutional encouragement by the Indian state, that has "forced initially extremist parties toward the center." [3]

This thesis also argues that ethnic mobilization can facilitate democracy. It makes no claims about democratic stability, defined as "the preservation of a system

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[2] See Kanchan Chandra, "Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability," *Perspectives on Politics* 3 : 2 (June 2005) : 235-52.
[3] Ibid., 236.

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of competitive elections" [4] ; the arguments it advances pertain to the substantive dimension of democracy instead. It posits that ethnic parties representing subaltern ethnic constituencies can help democratization by deepening material justice. The literature on ethnic politics is replete with studies that show ethnic parties to have delivered psychological and symbolic empowerment to the ethnic poor ; this thesis, however, argues that ethnic parties secure material empowerment for this constituency as well. The BSP, furthermore, is not the only ethnic party to illustrate this point ; some of the indigenous parties that have emerged in Latin America in the 1990s have also attempted to secure material rewards for subaltern voters, and deepen economic democracy. I discuss these cases in greater detail in Section 3.2.

3.2. ETHNIC PARTIES AND CLASS

Ethnic mobilization, it is widely believed, divides labour, and impedes the development of class consciousness. While this claim is true, it ignores the role ethnic parties can play in addressing the material concerns of the poorer sections of ethnic constituencies, in situations where left parties have failed to mobilize these sections on the basis of class-based appeals.

This thesis studies the BSP in Uttar Pradesh, the largest state in India. Uttar Pradesh has proved to be difficult terrain for the left in North India ; left parties in the state have found it difficult to mobilize agricultural labour, the vast majority of them SCs and lower backwards, on the basis of class. It is, thus, no coincidence that the SSP, the only left party to have emerged as a major player in government, relied on the idiom of "backward caste" to build its coalition of the rural poor. The SSP also emphasized the importance of caste-based reservations, advancing the promise of 60 percent reservations for backward castes as early as in 1962.[5] Upon forming the government with the BKD in 1969, however, the SSP found its agenda overrun by its coalition partner, a party representing a particularly prosperous section of the peasantry, namely, the Jats of Western Uttar Pradesh. Charan Singh, the leader of the BKD, not only opposed reservations for the poorer sections of backward

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Zoya Hasan, "Power and Mobilization : Patterns of Resilience and Change in Uttar Pradesh Politics," in Francine Frankel and M.S.A. Rao (eds) *Dominance and State Power in Modern India : Decline of a Social Order*, Volume 1 (Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1989), 133-203, at 192.

communities, but also proposed that SC reservations be discontinued beyond the 1960s.[6] Most importantly, the BKD resisted the SSP's efforts to lower land ceilings, and distribute surplus land to landless labour.[7] The BKD, in other words, saw agricultural labour as little more than a vote bank, and an aid for capturing power ; this was evident from its governmental programme, which was tailored to cater to the Jat landholding class. The setback to its agenda did not, however, prevent the SSP from continuing its political alliance with Charan Singh ; the year 1974 thus saw the BKD and SSP merge to form the BLD, which allowed the SSP's brand of agrarian politics to be swallowed whole by the kulak platform.[8]

Agricultural labour in Uttar Pradesh has also been courted by the Congress, a party that has made no explicit appeals to caste or class. It has instead relied on traditional patronage linkages to forge a multi-class and multi-caste alliance, that has integrated SCs vertically into a coalition headed by the upper caste landed, with Congress governments catering specifically to this latter constituency. It is only in its populist phase, under Indira Gandhi's leadership, that the Congress has secured any material benefits for the rural poor. However, while both ceiling surplus land, and *gaon sabha* plots, have been allocated to the SC and lower backward landless during this period, these efforts have amounted to little more than a strategy employed by Mrs. Gandhi, to centralize power, and win elections without the help of the party organization. That Mrs. Gandhi's land agenda was not backed by any serious programmatic intent was clear from the fact that the Congress did little to ensure that beneficiaries were actually able to take possession of their plots.

While the BSP and the left have shared a programmatic intent pertaining to land, the BSP alone has used its time in government to deliver on this agenda. Unlike the SSP, which allowed the compulsions of electoral politics to run its land agenda underground, the BSP has been careful to use its stints in government to deliver to, and consolidate its base amongst, the rural poor, often at the cost of alienating the BJP, the upper caste party with which it has thrice shared power. It has thus taken an ethnic party mobilizing explicitly on the basis of caste, to address the land situation facing agricultural labour in programmatic terms.

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[6] Ibid., 191.
[7] Ibid., 182.
[8] Ibid., 181.

The BSP, of course, looks much more like a "bourgeois" party, as some critics on the left have called it, in Western Uttar Pradesh. Here, it has urged SC labour to educate themselves, and enter the professions and the government sector, the latter through the use of quotas. For its own part, it has provided a near-perfect quota regime, guaranteeing full recruitment in reserved seats. While this muddies any picture of the BSP as a party with an agrarian agenda, it also demonstrates the flexibility that it enjoys as an ethnic party, vis-à-vis parties on the left. The old left in India had decried reservations, arguing that it reinforced caste identities, and made for a "backward" politics. The new left, on the other hand, has overlooked the material concerns of constituencies, such as Chamar labour in the West, who have not only shifted off the land, but are also looking to shed their working class status altogether, and move into lower ranking white collar positions in both the private and the public sector. The BSP, in contrast, has been ideologically free to encourage the politics of upward mobility ; it has, at the same time, employed the language of caste in the East, which has allowed the party to engage a subaltern constituency that has not responded to class-based appeals, historically speaking.

Ethnic parties mobilizing lower class constituencies have also emerged in Latin America in the 1990s. Indigenous parties in Bolivia, Ecuador and Columbia have attempted to provide substantive policy benefits to indigenous communities ; the protection of land rights, and economic help for farmers, have been especially important items on their agenda.[9] As Donna Lee Van Cott argues, it was the significant material achievements of indigenous movement representatives in Columbia and Ecuador that brought them public support, and facilitated the transformation of movements into parties. In Bolivia again, indigenous organizations participated in a massive mobilization concerning an issue of great interest to indigenous groups in the lowlands and highlands, namely, the 1996 agrarian reform law. The mobilization succeeded in substantially altering the law, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of these organizations amongst indigenous people. In all three cases, it

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[9] My account of the politics of indigenous parties in Bolivia, Ecuador and Columbia is drawn from Donna Lee Van Cott's book on the subject. See Donna Lee Van Cott, *From Movements to Parties in Latin America : The Evolution of Ethnic Politics* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2005).

was the public esteem accruing from significant policy gains delivered by indigenous movements that encouraged the formation of ethnic parties.[10]

The emergence of ethnic parties was also facilitated by the decline of the left, which left it to indigenous movements to effectively oppose neo-liberal policies in the 1990s.[11] And while the cadres of the left were absorbed by the new ethnic parties, the role of non-indigenous politicians within the indigenous parties of the 1990s was very different from the indigenous-non-indigenous alliances of the past. In the 1970s, these alliances had been hierarchical, with the leftist component dictating terms[12]; relations had also been bitter with the left proclaiming cultural claims to be "anachronistic and counter-revolutionary," and with racism being rampant in leftist ranks.[13] In the 1990s, however, the power balance was significantly reversed ; with indigenous leaders in control, there was no room for the left to manipulate indigenous politicians. Still more significantly, the ability of indigenous parties to mobilize on cultural, as well as material, platforms also allowed them to capture votes beyond the traditional leftist base.[14]

The cases of the BSP in India, and indigenous parties in Latin America, are analogous in important ways. Both instances involved ethnic parties mobilizing the subaltern more effectively than the left, by virtue of the flexibility lent to them by their ethnic platforms. This flexibility allowed the BSP to address the concerns of labourers seeking to shed their working class status much better than leftist parties, whose ideological rigidity prevented them from sympathizing with mobility aspirations. Its caste-based appeals, on the other hand, allowed the BSP to engage the agrarian poor (which while fitting the traditional definition of a left constituency, had proved resistant to class-based appeals) to a far greater extent than the left itself. Similarly, indigenous parties in Bolivia, Ecuador and Columbia have benefitted from making culture-based appeals, which have attracted voters repelled by the left's disdain for cultural platforms ; they have, at the same time, tapped into the

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[10] Ibid., 214.
[11] Ibid., 216.
[12] Ibid., 15, 38.
[13] Ibid., 37.
[14] Ibid., 37, 216, 229.

redistributive concerns of the electorate by taking on neo-liberal policies as these have affected the indigenous voter.[15]

Apart from mobilizing a broader swathe of the subaltern electorate than the left, the ethnic parties under discussion have also done a better job of delivering material benefits to the subaltern poor. While the SSP allowed the BKD to exploit its base of small farmers and landless labourers, the BSP, in contrast, was careful not to allow the BJP, the upper caste party with whom it governed in coalition thrice, to subordinate its subaltern agenda to its upper caste platform, a move that not only helped the BSP consolidate its subaltern base, but also alienated the BJP's upper caste constituencies from the party. In Latin America, the left's incorporation of indigenous movements was not only hierarchical, but also laced with racism. The left thus directed public works projects away from areas populated by indigenous peoples, and employed universalistic visions of the civic good as a rationale to justify racist policies disadvantaging indigenous communities. Left parties also espoused a politics of patronage,[16] that divided indigenous constituencies into groups attached to different left organizations, and prevented a horizontal mobilization of the subaltern vote. It was only when ethnic parties emerged in the 1990s that the shift from patronage to programmatic politics occurred, which unified the indigenous base, which in turn strengthened indigenous parties.

This reinforces my earlier point that ethnic parties can serve to strengthen economic democracy. Where left parties have failed to mobilize subalterns sufficiently broadly to obtain a mandate for programmatic change, or alternatively, where their politics have impeded subaltern unity, and encouraged clientelistic networks, ethnic parties have sometimes stepped in to fill the gap. The availability of a cultural lexicon has allowed these parties to use a wider range of appeals, which has enhanced chances of electoral success ; this broad mandate, in turn, has allowed them more leverage to push difficult material agendas, often involving redistributive goals. This suggests, in sum, that ethnic parties have sometimes catered better to lower class constituencies than class parties themselves.

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[15] Ibid., 37, 216, 229.
[16] Ibid., 84-5.

3.3. ETHNIC PARTIES AND PROGRAMMATIC POLITICS

The literature on ethnic politics sees patronage as a resource used by ethnic entrepreneurs to buy votes in patronage democracies. Kanchan Chandra defines "patronage- democracies" as democracies "in which the state monopolizes access to jobs and services, *and* in which elected officials have discretion in the implementation of laws allocating the jobs and services at the disposal of the state." Chandra argues that the "key aspect of a patronage democracy is ... the power of elected officials to distribute the vast resources controlled by the state to voters on an *individualized* basis," [17] which encourages politicians to use state resources and services to garner political support. [18]

This thesis both accepts, and builds on, this understanding of patronage ; it argues that ethnic parties can use patronage, not only to purchase votes, but also to buy endurance for policy initiatives benefiting constituencies other than those receiving patronage benefits. This, in turn, suggests that the tight association between ethnic parties and patronage politics needs to be reworked and made more flexible, so as to accommodate cases where we have such parties delivering not just patronage, but also policy rewards to voters, within the context of patronage democracies.

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[17] Kanchan Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed : Patronage and Head Counts in India* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6.
[18] Ibid., 133.

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