

## EMERGENCE OF EXTREME BACKWARD CASTES (EBCs) POLITICS IN BIHAR

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### Abstract

This study attempts to portray the trajectory of the rise and growth of the backward class of Bihar from a historical and political perspective. It will also look into the process of transformation of EBCs from 'Class- in -itself' to 'Class- for- itself'. The Karpoori Thakur Ministry's reservation policy indicates a sea change in the structure of Bihar's political sociology. Despite some hiatus, the coming into power of Lalu Prasad-led JD Government, the process of backward dominance in Bihar's politics accelerated. However, the EBCs failed to keep pace with the OBCs, and a long gap became perceptible between them, though the former also moved ahead. Nitish Government has taken several steps to fill the gap to bring EBCs into the mainstream.

**Keywords:** EBCs, Bihar, Indian government, backward Caste, Reservation

### Introduction

The purpose of this research is to depict the development and expansion of EBCs in historical and political contexts. It will also investigate how EBCs are transformed from 'Class-in-itself' to 'Class-for-itself'. The reservation policy of the Karpoori Thakur Ministry reflects a major shift in Bihar's political sociology - The Forwards or twice-born caste groups that dominated Bihar before to independence are being displaced by the Backward Castes as the state's main stratum. Despite a brief respite, the accession to power of the JD government headed by Lalu Prasad has hastened the trend of backward domination in Bihar politics. However, the EBCs were unable to keep up with the OBCs, and a significant gap arose between them, despite the fact that the former progressed and advanced. The Nitish government has made various attempts to close the gap and integrate EBCs into society. Sincere attempts will be made in this work to sketch the many contours of EBCs from their inception to their current position.

The acronym "EBC" refers to Extremely Backward Classes/Castes, also known as Most Backward Castes, which now number about 115. In Bihar, they are referred to as 'Annexure-1,' whereas OBCs are referred to as 'Annexure-II.' The Government of Bihar published a G.O. in 1951, designating the Other Backward Classes in two annexes for the purpose of giving post-matric scholarships and other benefits under a plan initiated by the Ministry of Education, Government of India<sup>1</sup>: Annexure-I had 79 castes that were regarded to be more backward than Annexure-30 II's castes. The first Backward Classes Commission, led by Kaka Saheb Kalelkar and established at the national level on January 29, 1953, issued a list of 2399 Backward Castes for the whole country, of which 837 were categorized as "Most Backward."<sup>2</sup> In addition, the Commission designated 127 castes as backward in Bihar. The Major Castes and Ethnic Groups of Bihar may be portrayed with percentages of the total population given alongside their names in the table below, based on the report of the Kaka Kalelkar Commission:

Category	Caste/Group	Per cent of population A *	Total B*
Forwards /Twice-born	Brahman	4.7	4.6
	Bhumihar	2.9	2.8
	Rajput	4.2	4.1
	Kayasths	1.2	1.2
	Total Forwards	13.0	12.7
Upper Backwards	Bania	0.6	0.6
	Yadav	11.0	10.7
	Kurmi	3.6	3.5
	Koiri	4.1	4.0
	Total Upper Backwards	19.3	18.8
Lower Backwards	Barhi	1.0	15.6
	Dhanuk	1.8	
	Hajjam	1.4	
	Kahar	1.7	
	Kandu	1.6	
	Kumhar	1.3	
	Lohar	1.3	
	Mallah	1.5	
	Tatwa	1.6	
	Teli	2.8	
	Total	16.0	
	Other Shudras	16.0	15.6
	Total Lower Backwards	32.0	31.2
	Total Backwards	51.3	50.0
Muslims		12.5	12.2
Bengali		-----	2.4
Scheduled Castes		14.4	13.8
Scheduled Tribes		9.1	8.9
Grand Total		100.0	100.0

**Table-1: Major Castes and Ethnic Groups of Bihar <sup>3</sup>**

To compound the confusion, Chairman Kaka Kalelkar repudiated the whole idea of backward castes, i.e. He was against the idea of caste as a cause of backwardness. As a result, in response to a letter from the Home Ministry dated August 14, 1961, the Bihar government opted to stick with the list that had been produced in 1951. In 1964, the Patna High Court deemed the 1951 Bihar Government's list of Very Backward Classes illegal, based on the Supreme Court's decision in Balaji Vs. State of Mysore (A.I.R.1963, SC 649), since it depended on caste as a measure of backwardness. As a result, the State Government determined that the present educational advantages should only be offered to pupils from the Other Backward Classes listed in the 1951 Order who had a monthly family income of less than Rs. 500. Admission to a medical school In December 1971, the Bihar government replied to the legal rejection by creating a fresh committee on the subject, led by Mungeri Lal. In February 1976, the commission issued its final report, which included a revised list of 128 castes, 94 of which were designated as "Most Backward" and the remaining 34 as "Backward." The 128 were

essentially the same as in previous incarnations, with the addition of a Christian institution, and the monthly income cap was set at Rs.250.

### **Mungerilal Commission**

The Bihar Backward Classes Commission was established by Bhola Paswan Shastri's government in December 1971, and it was chaired by Shri Mungeri Lal, a member of the Bihar Legislative Council. The panel has six members in addition to him. The Commission was requested to provide recommendations for improving the lives of OBCs, as well as SCs and STs. The Mungeri Lal Commission compiled its own list of Other Backward Classes and Most Backward Classes, taking into consideration social status, educational backwardness, adequacy of government service representation, and adequacy of share in trade, commerce, and industry, among other factors.

MBCs/EBCs were determined to be significantly behind OBCs by the Commission. While not as strong in social, political, or economic affairs as the state's first four 'twice-born' caste groups (Brahmins, Bhumihars, Rajputs, and Kayasthas), the MBCs were far behind them.

### **The Making of EBCs under Nitish Government**

Internal tensions, as well as competing political goals, started to show indications of fissures in the OBC coalition forged during the Mandal movement and subsequent elections, and it could not be maintained for long. The 'people sovereignty' of Lalu's rule had reached its limits, and political mobilization of non-Yadav-OBCs started to take shape. EBCs are a diversified caste group that makes up 32% of the population yet only have 5% representation in the Bihar legislature. This heterogeneous mix of EBC castes needed to unite together under the leadership and flag of another powerful backward-caste leader. As a consequence of this demand, Nitish Kumar, a Kurmi caste leader and Lalu's old comrade-in-arm, acquired political space. In 1994, Nitish Kumar left Lalu and co-founded Samata Party with George Fernandes. Higher castes and even OBCs referred to the EBC caste group as pachpania, and it became the rallying point for this movement (an assortment of various individual castes and heterogeneity, they were never in a position to make claim on lower castes).

Their administration and state politics lack numerical power due to their geographical dispersion. Kurmis, Koeris, EBCs, lower Muslims (Pasmanda), and Mahadalits, as well as his coalition partner, the BJP's upper-caste and business-community support base. Finally, in the November 2005 assembly elections, EBCs allied with lower caste Muslims and upper castes to overthrow the RJD government, and the JD(U)-BJP coalition was elected. Nitish Kumar's ruling strategy to bring the Assembly to the lowest among the backward castes and groups was enhanced by Nitish Kumar's governing strategy to bring the Assembly to the lowest among the backward castes and communities, which was started by Lalu-Rabri led administrations.

The state Cabinet on January 12, 2006 approved the decision to promulgate Bihar Panchayati Raj Amendment Ordinance, 2006, to amend the Panchayati Raj Act, 1993, for extending quota facility to EBCs and Women in the Panchayat bodies. Accordingly, In the three-tier local bodies - District Boards, Panchayat Samitis, and Gram Panchayats - the NDA government agreed to offer EBCs and women 20 percent and 50 percent reservation, respectively. Mukhiyas (chairpersons of GPs) and ward members; Sarpanches (elected heads of Gram Panchayats at GPs) and panches; Pramukhs (chairpersons of Panchayat Samitis) and Panchayat Samiti members; Adhyakhs (chairpersons of ZPs) and ZP members made up the state's elected representatives in these PRIs. 1,464 Mukhiyas, 18,901 Gram Panchayat Members, 1,464 Sarpanch's, and 18,900 panchas were elected from the EBC category. of representational politics has reorganised power equation at village and municipal ward levels; and has initiated far-reaching consequences for assertion by another stratum of backward castes in state politics.

In December 2016, the Bihar Cabinet announced a 50 percent reservation in judicial posts. EBCs will get 21% reservation, OBCs will receive 12%, SCs will receive 16%, and STs will receive 1%. A quota of 35% has been set aside for women from all categories. On May 15, 2018, the Bihar government authorised a plan to provide financial help to EBC candidates who pass the UPSC and state public service commission civil service preliminary examinations. At a cabinet meeting led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, the "Mukhyamantri Atyant Pichhda Varg Civil Seva Protsahan Yojana" was authorized. "Under the plan, EBC candidates who pass the UPSC civil services PT will be rewarded Rs one lakh, while those from the social group who pass the BPSC preliminaries will be granted Rs 50,000," Prem Singh Meena, Secretary, Department of Welfare of OBCs/EBCs, told reporters.

### **Lower OBCs and Muslims**

Lower Other Backward Classes (OBCs) or Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), who make up over a quarter of Bihar's voters (24%) are a varied group whose vote hasn't been consolidated behind any party. According to the results of the past three Assembly elections and the most recent Lok Sabha election, the voting patterns of upper-class lower OBCs and lower-class lower OBCs differed substantially. In the two most recent Assembly elections, the BJP performed better among upper-class members of the lower OBCs.

In October 2005, it received 39% of upper-class votes in the community, compared to 18% of lower-class ballots, and 42% of upper-class votes in 2010, compared to 21% of lower-class votes. The BJP obtained a similar percentage of EBC votes across all classes in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, whereas the JD (U) scored significantly better among the upper class (26%) than the lower class (14%) of EBCs. The BJP will undoubtedly wage a strong campaign for the EBC vote. The question is whether they will be able to combine it across classes, as they did in 2014, or whether their support will come mostly from the upper classes, like in 2005 and 2010.

The Muslim vote, making up about 16 percent of Bihar's electorate, has also tended to be segmented on the basis of class. But this segmentation has not been as consistent as that of the upper castes. Lalu's RJD — for whom Muslims have been a critical base of support — performed more strongly among lower-class Muslims (53 percent) than upper-class Muslims (38 percent) in 2000, but observed the opposite trend in 2010 (32 percent among upper-class Muslims and 23 percent among lower class Muslims). Congress mirrored these trends, winning a larger bloc of upper-class (27 percent) than lower-class (11 percent) Muslim voters in 2005, but did better among lower-class (16 percent) than upper-class Muslim voters (7 percent) in 2014. The class then appears to matter among Muslim votes, though its relationship with the RJD and Congress share of the vote has not been consistent.

### **Emergence Of OBCs As a Separate Political Category**

In 1974, Jayaprakash Narayan spearheaded a student-led anti-Congress campaign that demanded state Congress governments resign. Massive protests, strikes, and shutdowns erupted as a result of this movement. Jayaprakash Narayan saw his populist movement as a trigger for a 'complete revolution,' as he put it. This was intended to clean up India's public life and put an end to Indira Gandhi's autocratic leadership. This movement had a significant impact on regional parties claiming to represent lower caste concerns that arose throughout North India in the 1990s, notably in Bihar, where JP had the most influence. OBC politics evolved as a large populist movement within this revolution (Witsoe 2013).

The Mungeri Lal Commission report was executed by Karpoori Thakur of the Janata Party in 1978. This commission was established in 1971, and its final report was delivered in 1975. It was the first serious attempt in Bihar to comprehend the predicament of the backward classes.

The division of the backward classes into Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Most Backward Classes (MBCs) was advocated by this Commission (Ahmed 2010). When Thakur used the study to establish backward caste reservations at the state level, it resulted in massive riots by advanced caste youth and the collapse of his administration (Ibid). This decision by the Janata administration sparked contradictory social mobilizations in Bihar and influenced the state's politics in the decades to come based on caste-based accusations. Lalu Prasad, Nitish Kumar, Sushil Modi, and Ram Vilas Paswan all rose to prominence in state politics during this period. Bihar's politics changed dramatically in the 1990s. Upper castes throughout the nation were opposed to the Mandal Commission's recommendations being implemented. To confront anti-Mandal agitations in Bihar, backward caste groups were organized. This resulted in a public brawl between anti-reservationists (mostly higher caste youngsters) and pro-reservationists (mainly the backward caste youth). This conflict heightened the animosity between the progressive and backward classes (Kumar 1999). Both Lalu Prasad and Nitish Kumar became vocal proponents of Mandal politics and reservations.

In the post-independence era, Bihar's political history may be split into three different stages. During the first phase (1947-1967), the state was governed by the Congress party, which was led by upper-caste elites. The second phase (1967-1990) was marked by the gradual loss of the Congress and the upper castes, as well as the gradual but steady rise of the middle castes' political dominance. The third phase (1990 onwards) saw a total reversal of the first phase, which saw the Congress party and the upper castes marginalized in Bihar politics. (Kumar et al., 2008; Kumar et al., 2008). This article concentrates on the third phase since it was during this time that backward castes became more visible in politics. Congress suffered a huge setback in the 1990s. It not only lost the majority of parliamentary seats, but also witnessed a significant drop in its traditional support base, which included upper castes, Dalits, and Muslims. The backward castes were given the chance to unite and seize power as a result of 'Mandalisation.' Under the leadership of Ram Sunder Das, Lalu Prasad Yadav, Nitish Kumar, and Ram Vilas Paswan, Dalits and OBCs were mobilized.

## **CONCLUSION**

Politics and caste are inextricably linked. They have an effect on one another. In national, state, and municipal elections, caste plays a varied role. Many variables influence the creation of political parties and organizations, the most important of which is caste, particularly in North Indian political parties. Not only is the caste structure of that area used to build parties, but it is also used to pick candidates. Reservation legislation has increased the significance of caste in electoral politics and allowed scheduled and backward castes to participate in politics.

The votes of the OBC and EBCs were split between the RJD and the JD (U)-BJP coalition till the 2005 elections, according to several Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. We don't see a noticeable movement in preference till after the 2009 Lok Sabha elections. They voted in greater numbers for the JD (U)-BJP coalition than in any election in the recent several decades. During the 2010 assembly elections and the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, this trend became even more pronounced.

Between 1996 and 2010, while the JD (U) and the BJP were in an alliance, one can ask if the lower OBC voted for the JD (U) or the BJP. The results of the 2014 survey data show a major movement towards the BJP when the party was not in an alliance with the JD (U), indicating that the party was more popular among this group of voters. There is also evidence that the BJP benefited from its affiliation with the JD (U), at least in terms of lower OBC voters, who favored the Nitish Kumar-led JD (U) over the BJP. However, no one can dispute that Narendra Modi's personal popularity played a role in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. It's impossible to



judge if things are still the same as they were. Despite being a secular nation, caste is an integral part of Indian society, and therefore, caste has been an important factor in politics.

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