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## ELECTORAL POLITICS OF BAHUJAN ALLIES IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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### ABSTRACT

The present investigation particularly focuses on the electoral politics of Bahujan allies in the State of Andhra Pradesh during the year 1999-2009. The BSPs entry into Andhra Pradesh and its electoral experiment was well received by the Dalit-Bahujan. A total of 1756 respondents were selected randomly and they represent different age groups and political perspectives. Stratified sampling method has been adopted for selection of sample and care has been taken to select equal number of respondents from each social group to make the sample representative. The piece of investigation has shown consistent findings with regard to the proposition that Bahujan allies in Andhra Pradesh are breaking the monopoly of upper castes during 1999-2009. Contrary to this, the BSP presented a dismal picture in the State of Andhra Pradesh from 1999-2009 and proved to be short-lived.

**Key Words:** Electoral Politics; Bahujan Allies; Political Hegemony; Election Promises and Public Policies

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

The most significant feature of a democracy is the *election process*. In fact, elections have been described as the pillar of the Indian democratic regime. In a sense, elections form the essence of democracy (Kondo, 2007). Election provides a mechanism by which people can choose their representatives at regular intervals.

In modern democracies, political parties are considered as indispensable vehicles of representation. (Pushpa, 2009). They articulate people's needs and aspirations. With the beginning of coalition politics, the nature of political participation has shown considerable changes in the 1990s. A clear shift can be seen from m *One-party-dominant system to multiple-party system* and minority government in Indian politics.

Since the 1950s, political power has been shifting away from upper caste Hindus to the rest, who are far more numerous. From a society where politics once held a marginal public role, India has become an intensely political society. By the 1970s, for instance, many backward castes - located above the out-castes- had gained enough economic and political clout to become a powerful 'vote bank'. They now aspired to a larger share of administrative and educational opportunities, where they were underrepresented. Some of the largest and best organized backward castes were the 'Yadavs in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Jats in Haryana and Punjab, Marathas in Maharash-tra, Vokkaligas in Karnataka, and Goudars in Tamil Nadu.



The caste structure in Andhra Pradesh is akin to that existing in most other parts of India, if it is viewed as a traditional social order in which people are functionally dependent on each other but separated as distinct groups, stratified as high and low. Nonetheless, the nature of the caste system has been undergoing tremendous changes over hundreds of years, with varying patterns in different regions and as such, caste should not be viewed as a fixed and rigid social relation. All castes in Andhra Pradesh (except the Brahmans) share the linguistic boundaries of the State, although they have several features in common with other castes similarly placed in the social hierarchy in other States.

At least three reviews of election studies have been realized, by Narain (1978), Brass (1985), and Kondo (2007). Both Narain and Kondo provide a fairly exhaustive list of publications in this field, and discuss their relevance and quality. Brass' review also offers a detailed discussion of the advantages and limitations of ecological approaches. A broad typology of election studies published since the late 1980s—a moment which can be considered as the emergence of the new configuration of the Indian political scene, characterized by (i) the importance of regional parties and regional politics; (ii) the formation of ruling coalition's at the national and regional levels; and (iii) the polarization of national politics around the Congress, the BJP, and the 'third space'.

The recent works include Ji-Eun Lee, (2012) 'Dalit Empowerment in Independent India—comparative research on two political parties, RPI and BSP'; Jasjeet.S.Virk (2013) The Bahujan Samaj Party: Has Engaging in Party Coalitions Affected BSP Ideology? ;Sunil B. Chapaitka(2013) Brief Review On Caste and Politics in India ;Kuldeep Singh (2013) Electoral Politics in India: Emerging Trends.; Siddaramu B (2013) The Consciousness of Caste in the Contemporary Indian Society; Sambaiah Gundimeda(2014) The Bahujan Samaj Party: Between Social Justice and Political Practice;Avidit Acharya, John E. Roemer and Rohini Somanatha( 2014) Caste, Corruption and Political Competition in India ;Sandeep. Gulabsingh and S.A. Palekar (2014) 'The Role of Caste in Indian politics'; Balaramulu.C and Ravinder.D (2014) Five Decades of Democratic Decentralization Process in Andhra Pradesh' Pratap Singh et al (2014) BSP's Transformation into Multiethnic Outfit. (Kondo, 2007)

Squarely a little research has been done in India on electoral politics of Bahujan allies. Moreover, it seems to be in an embryonic stage in the State of Andhra Pradesh. Since there has been no systematic study made in this area, this study was designed to evaluate the electoral politics of Bahujan supported parties in Andhra Pradesh.

### **Objectives of the study:**

The present study has been taken up as a humble beginning of the tremendous task ahead with the following objectives:



1. To investigate the electoral politics of Bahujan Allies in the State of Andhra Pradesh, especially during 1999 to 2009.
2. To appraise the determinants of electoral politics of Bahujan Allies in the State of Andhra Pradesh, especially during 1999 to 2009.
3. To explore the perceptions of voters on electoral politics of Bahujan Allies in the State of Andhra Pradesh, especially during 1999 to 2009.
4. To evaluate the role of caste and political hegemony with special reference to electoral politics of Bahujan Allies in the State of Andhra Pradesh, especially during 1999 to 2009.

### **Delimitations of the Study:**

As stated earlier, this piece of research was to investigate electoral politics of Bahujan Alliances in Andhra Pradesh during 1999-2009. Hence, this study too had space, time and resource constraints as in any other study.

1. The area of investigation was restricted to three districts from three regions of the State i.e, Telangana, Coastal and Rayalaseema.
2. The study was confined to Bahujan allies in the State of Andhra Pradesh during 1999-2009.
3. The investigation was limited to the perceptions of 1756 voters from three regions of the State of Andhra Pradesh during for the electoral politics of 1999-2009.

### **Research Methodology:**

The data for study is collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary data is collected through structured questionnaire and secondary data is collected from published books and research articles. Since political mobilization is almost the same in rural and urban India, the current study has been located in rural and urban Andhra Pradesh. The state is divided into three distinct geographical regions, namely Telangana, Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. Hence, three districts each have been selected from every region. The districts selected for the study are Medak, Adilabad, and Nizambad (Telangana districts), Krishna, West Godavari, and Srikakulam (Andhra districts) Kurnool, Kadapa, and Chittoor (Rayalseema districts). Respondents have been selected from three regions following the principles of satisfied and representative sample.

The research sample was designed as per the universal norm of randomly selecting the respondents. A total of (1800) **1756 respondents** were selected randomly and they represent different age groups and political perspectives. Stratified sampling method has been adopted for selection of sample and care has been taken to select equal number of respondents from each social group to make the sample representative.



A questionnaire was developed keeping in view the objectives and hypotheses of the study. It consists of two parts.

**Part- A:** comprises ten questions, seeking personal information of the respondent, which includes personal profile like, name, Parliamentary/Assembly constituencies and name of the Polling station; gender; marital status; formal education; their regular activities like watching T.V, listening to the radio, reading newspapers, using internet etc.; their interest in politics; face-book account; e-mail account and twitter; retirement age for politicians; and consideration for electoral voting.

**Part- B:** It consists of ten statements based on the perceptions of the sample related to Bahujan allies in Andhra Pradesh. The reason why people do not exercise their franchise; the two terms of UPA led coalition government; Prime Ministers performance; the two giant parties and their performance; improvement of conditions during 1999-2009; breaking monopoly of upper castes with the advent of Bahujan allies; unfulfilled poll promises of government and Bahujan Movement in Andhra Pradesh; blow to political hegemony; TDP and Bahujans to fight together for 2009 elections ;on the issue of separate Telangana; proportional representation of Bahujans in electoral politics; transfer of political power from upper castes to lower castes; Bahujans as Chief ministers; acceptance of SCs by BCs and structural changes etc.,

The questionnaire was administered to the sample selected. Suitable statistical techniques with percentages along with Microsoft excel package and SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 16.0 were employed to analyze the data and draw inferences.

## 1.2 MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

- 1) The results of the study could mirror that an overwhelming majority of the sample (91.0%) watch Television daily for news; a good majority of the sample (54.0%) opted that they 'never' listen to radio; a large sample (87.0%) confessed that they read news paper daily; and nearly half of the sample (49.0%) opined that they 'sometimes use internet services to keep in touch with the politics.
- 2) A good majority of the sample (57.0%) confessed that they are very much interested in day-to-day politics.
- 3) It was found that an overwhelming majority of the sample ( 83.0%) had no access to modern electronic accounts like facebook,twitter etc.,
- 4) A large majority of the sample (69.5%) agreed that politicians should have the retirement age.
- 5) A good majority of the sample (41.0%) considered caste as the dominating factor for voting.



- 6) A great majority of the sample (54.0%) preferred that they think their vote would matter in the process of voting.
- 7) A good majority of the sample (58.0%) preferred second term (2009-13) was better by the Congress led UPA Government.
- 8) A good majority of the sample (44.5%) opined somewhat satisfied by the performance of Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister.
- 9) With regard to coalition governments a) A good majority (47.0%) preferred Congress government is a better party with good leaders; b) For good governance and administration, a great majority of (63.0%) voted for Congress government; c) With respect to curbing corruption, more than half of the sample (54.0%) could go for Congress led government; d) For maintaining religious harmony, a great majority of the sample (71.0%) opted for Congress led government; e) In handling economic crises, a large majority of the sample (65.0%) voted for Congress-led government; f) For running a coalition government, a great majority of the sample (75.0%) supported Congress-led governments; and g) As in the case of countering terrorism, a great majority of the sample (69.0%) voted for BJP led government.
- 10) As per the conditions of farmers is concerned, a more than half of the sample (55.0%) had confessed they 'remain the same' during 2004-2009; b) As per the conditions of farmers is concerned, a more than half of the sample (55.0%) had confessed they 'remain the same'; c) With regard to the conditions of Government Schools, it was demonstrated that a good majority of the sample (69.1%) opined as 'remained the same'; d) Regarding the conditions of roads is concerned, more than half of the sample (55.0%) confessed as 'improved'; and e) As per the safety of women, the quantitative data reveals that a good majority of the sample (49.0%) opined as 'remained same'.
- 11) A great majority of the sample (69.3%) confessed that to a large extent Bahujan allies are struggling to break the monopoly of upper castes in Andhra Pradesh.
- 12) As per the unfulfilled promises of government helped Bahujan Movement in Andhra Pradesh that a great majority of the sample (74.0%) opined it 'to a larger extent'.
- 13) An overwhelming majority of the sample (81.0%) confessed that Bahujan Movement in Andhra Pradesh has become a real threat to political hegemony 'to a larger extent'.
- 14) A great majority of the sample (66.0%) expressed 'to a larger extent', TDP and Bahujan alliances should fight the Elections together,
- 15) A good majority of the sample (41.6%) were in favour of bifurcation of State.



- 16) A good majority of the sample (47.0%) agreed to a larger extent that proportional representation would enhance the image of Bahujans in the State of Andhra Pradesh.
- 17) A large majority of the sample (58.0%) opined to some extent for transferring of political power from upper castes to Bahujan for political equilibrium.
- 18) A good majority of the sample (47.0%) agreed to the statement that backward classes consider Scheduled Caste candidates for Chief Ministership,
- 19) A large majority of the sample (63.0%) agreed to some extent with regard to minority BCs accepting majority BCs in leadership projection.
- 20) A great majority of the sample (64%) opined that structural changes in socio-economic field to a larger extent can be brought through Baahujan allies in A.P. during 1999-2009 elections.

### 1.3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Before drawing a curtain on this study it is appropriate to say that this investigation has showed a set of consistent findings and gleaned much from Electoral Politics of Bahujan allies in the State of Andhra Pradesh during 1999-2009 and its contribution towards in enhancement of quality for improving electoral politics and sustainability is outlined. The hypotheses set forth are examined, discussed and presented as follows:

#### **1. It is hypothesized that Bahujan allies are struggling to break monopoly of upper castes in Andhra Pradesh during 1999-2009.**

Dalits comprise a stunning 52 percent of India's population (Ghose, 2003, 83). Dr. Ambedkar's struggles and eventual passing led to the rise of a new leader, Kanshi Ram, who aimed to unite lower castes through social work and eventually began focusing the bulk of his organizational efforts in the building of the political party that is known today as the BSP (Jaffrelot, 1998, 35)

The BSP's electoral success is seen as a unique phenomenon due to the fact that no other Indian political party running primarily under the platform of catering to the interests of ex-untouchables has achieved such success (Duncan, 1999, 36). However, the BSP could not have achieved success by simple voter majority because Dalits and other backwards castes (OBCs) do not comprise a direct voter majority. The BSP has found success by forming political coalitions with the Samajvadi Party (SP), Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), all of which have very different political ideologies and agendas than those of the BSP (Duncan, 1999). The political marginalization and discriminative attitude of the Congress Party and the Telugu Desam Party which were mainly led by the dominant caste of Reddy and Kamma, the political indifference of the Left parties to the specific



problems of dalits led them to build their own political autonomous identity (Ratnam, 2008).

The BSPs entry into Andhra Pradesh and its electoral experiment was well received by the Dalit-Bahujan forces. As a part of political mobilization for the 1994 Assembly elections the BSP has organised its first Public meeting at Nizam College in Hyderabad on January 23<sup>rd</sup> under the leadership of Bojja Tarakam, which evoked the spontaneous gathering of one lakh people. It is beyond doubt that the Dalit movement has affected the agenda of setting of various political parties in Andhra Pradesh.

Thus, the interaction between caste and politics has given rise to three developments. The first one refers to emergence of dominant elites from different castes but shares a secular outlook and homogeneous values. Secondly, several caste emerged to give the caste system a secular organizational form. The third refers to emergence of several factions along with elites groups have got politically organized. The system of factions is such that it divides not only political groups but also social groups. It thus facilitates the process of cross-cutting identification (Kumar, 2005). Kothari (1985) have rightly observed that the electoral system in India has given a new lease of life to caste identification (Chaudary, 2013). The piece of investigation has shown consistent findings with regard to the proposition that Bahujan allies in Andhra Pradesh are breaking the monopoly of upper castes during 1999-2009. This is evident from the stunning findings of the study a great majority of the sample (69.3%) confessed that to a large extent Bahujan allies are struggling to break the monopoly of upper castes in Andhra Pradesh. *Thus, the first hypothesis formulated is retained.*

**2. *It is hypothesized that socio-economic of factors are influencing electoral politics with special reference to Bahujan allies in Andhra Pradesh during 1999-2009.***

The demand of the Dalits is not limited to the annihilation of the caste system and the evil practice of untouchability. It goes further and calls for restructuring the Indian social order and creating a society where all the downtrodden masses will have an equal share in resources, power structure, social dignity and religious traditions. One has to wait and see if the political establishment of the dominant castes takes this assertion seriously or not. Whatever may be the response of the ruling castes and classes, the Dalit assertion has shown that a long drawn-out struggle alone can provide the space and scope for the Dalits to continue to fight for building an egalitarian, democratic and plural society (Louis, 2004). The five years (1999-2004) that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was at the Centre saw India go from a 4 per cent (1997-98) growth rate to 8.3 per cent (2003-04) that plummeted to 5 per cent (2008-09) under the Congress-led UPA.



The investigation demonstrated that a great majority of the respondents (64.0%) considered that socio-economic factors influence electoral politics of Bahuja allies in the State of Andhra Pradesh *to a larger extent* especially during 1999-2009 elections. *Thus, the second hypothesis is also accepted and thus, retained.*

**3. *It is hypothesized that public policies and promises during poll campaign helped the growth and development of Bahujan Movement in Andhra Pradesh during 1999-2009.***

Since the dialogue between political parties and the electorate is a continuous phenomenon, there exists the factor of unfulfilled promises and its consequence of anti-incumbency factor. All the promises made during an election could not be fulfilled. And even some of the promises are translated in to legislation, or a scheme or a project, their implementation might take time or could not be done so to the satisfaction of some or many. Even if five percent of the earlier committed vote turns hostile later, the impact on the election could be very adverse. So a ruling party always starts with a handicap in the next election (Hasim, 2009).

As per the unfulfilled promises of government helped Bahujan Movement in Andhra Pradesh, the statistical information discloses that a great majority of the sample (74.0%) opined it 'to a larger extent'. Hence, it can be concluded that unfulfilled promises of Governments certainly helped Bahujan Movement in Andhra Pradesh electoral process.

Therefore, *the hypothesis* public policies and promises during poll campaign helped the growth and development of Bahujan Movement in Andhra Pradesh during 1999-2009 is *accepted and retained.*

**4. *It is hypothesized that proportional representation shall diminish the image of Bahujan allies in Andhra Pradesh during 1999-2009***

Indian election results often spring surprises. It was particularly the case when the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), which led the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, unexpectedly lost the 2004 Lok Sabha election. Incidentally, many critics of economic reforms celebrated the outcome as a vote against the reforms. Since the state governments led by Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh and Digvijay Singh in Madhya Pradesh lost the state assembly elections around the same time, and both the governments were seen to be pro reforms, this view gained currency. On the other hand some observers attributed these election outcomes to the anti-incumbency factor. This view assumes that the Indian voters prefer change and they invariably vote against the ruling party.

In the Indian context, the literature on the incumbency advantage or disadvantage is relatively new. Over the past 30 years, BSP that essentially sought to transform the lives of the downtrodden and backward sections of the society has



more than 20 percent vote share in many Assembly constituencies, especially in Uttar Pradesh. Initially the main aim of the party was to fight against the obnoxious Manuwadi system. In this way the struggle of Kanshi Ram who was born in Scheduled Caste community, proved to be greatly effective and pregnant with far-reaching consequences. Later on his successor Mayawati took care of his legacy and is fulfilling the party's vision. After becoming the party chief, Mayawati justified the move stating that the BSP was committed to not only improve the socioeconomic conditions of the people of the 'Bahujan Samaj' but also of the poor among the upper caste Hindus, small and medium farmers, traders and people engaged in other professions. This helped BSP to transform its image from a dalit centric party which was known for erecting Ambedkar statues to a party that sought the development and welfare of all the communities. The party distributed tickets to the upper castes and Muslims. This instilled faith in the upper caste and Muslim towards BSP. Most of the BSP candidates of upper castes won and proved that this faith was not on paper but on practical and political ground. This gave BSP a new definition by transforming it from a dalit centric party into a multiethnic outfit that sought development of Sarvajan (all communities) (Singh, 2014).

Contrary to this, the BSP presented a dismal picture in the State of Andhra Pradesh from 1999-2009 and proved to be short-lived. However, the present piece of investigation vividly exhibited that a good majority of the sample (53.0%) agreed *to no extent* that proportional representation would diminish the image of Bahujans in the State of Andhra Pradesh. So, the fourth *null hypothesis* is rejected.

**5. *It is hypothesized that there is no threat to political hegemony dominant castes in electoral politics in Andhra Pradesh during 1999-2009.***

Political allegiances and party configurations in India have gone through several phases since the first elections in 1952 (Sridharan 2002). Until 1967, the Indian National Congress (INC), which led the Independence movement, won the national assembly with two-thirds of the seats based on a plurality of votes typically between 40 and 45 percent. During this period, elections to the national and state assemblies coincided, and we see a similar pattern of Congress Party domination in the states. Votes not received by the Congress were spread across a large number of other parties and Independents. The Congress vote and seat share fell over time and in the 1967 election the party held just over half the seats in the national assembly. U.P. is of special interest for the study of Indian politics because of the salience of caste-based rivalries and fierce contests for power (Chandra 2004; Banerjee and Pande 2011). While the SP and BSP emerged as strong regional parties, the two national parties, the INC and the BJP, have remained important, leading to a four-cornered battle for power. (Acharya, 2014)<sup>15</sup>

Out of the 23 districts in the state, the Reddys are a politically dominant upper caste in 15 districts where their share of the total district population is above 10 percent. Kadapa accounts for the highest proportion of Reddys at 27 percent of the total population. The Reddy-dominated districts include Kurnool, Anantapur



and Chittoor in Rayalaseema region, Nalgonda, Medak, Warangal, Mahbubnagar, Rangareddy, Nizamabad, Karimnagar and Adilabad in Telangana and Nellore, Guntur and Prakasam in coastal Andhra.

Kamma-dominated districts are Krishna and Khamman, though Kammass share power with Reddys in Prakasam, Guntur and Chittoor. Kapus dominate the politics of two districts - East and West Godavari. Other Backward Castes dominate the politics of three north coastal districts - Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam. Kapus share power with Kammass in Krishna and Guntur districts. Hyderabad is dominated by Muslims, as they account for 42 percent of the total electorate (Hasan, 2014)

By 1999, caste-based voting had become the fact of AP politics: survey data showed that 87% of Kammass and 62% of the "Peasant Other Backward Castes" in AP voted for the TDP while 77% of the Reddys, 64% of the scheduled castes and 60% of Muslims for the Congress (Suri 2002: Table 6). This meant that the overall election result rested with the other communities such as Kapus, "Service OBCs" and scheduled tribes who voted almost equally for the two major parties (ibid) and could swing the very fine division of the floating vote (10%) which decided which party will get the majority of seats in the assembly.

The emergence of other caste groups such as the Kapu-dominated Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) destabilised the electoral scene. The PRP proceeded to take away nearly 12% of the TDP vote share and ensured the victory for the second time of the Congress Party and YSR. (It soon merged with the Congress in 2011. Though it took place after YSR's death, it is speculated that this was the logical conclusion of his subtle moves to consolidate Congress Party power).

However, the re-emergence of the Telangana movement as a major mass movement meant that the equations within the Congress Party and the state – now dominated by YSR and the Rayalaseema Reddys – had to be addressed. YSR and the Congress had backed the movement as a way of enticing the Telangana voters away from the TDP and this worked well for the party in 2004 and 2009 (Pingle, 2011)

Even the Srikrishna Committee Report clearly indicated Caste is an important factor in the political history of Andhra Pradesh and remains critical for political mobilisation. Most scholars have pointed out the hegemony of the Reddy and Kamma castes.

Among the 294 members elected to the assembly in 2004, 180 belonged to the forward castes. They included 91 Reddys, 34 Kammass, 27 Kapus, 11 Velamas, 7 Kshatriyas, 4 Vysyas and one each from Lingayat, Are Kshatriya and Marwari community. The weaker sections including Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities accounted for 114 members in the house, including 48 BCs, 39 SCs, 16 STS and 11 minorities (Muslims). No political party can ignore the caste factor. No wonder, out of the 14 chief ministers in Andhra Pradesh in the last 52 years, as many as eight were Reddys, followed by Kammass (3), Brahmin, Velama and Dalit.



The findings of the present study amply demonstrate an overwhelming majority of the sample (81.0%) opined that Bahujan Movement in Andhra Pradesh has become a real threat to political hegemony 'to a larger extent'. On the other hand, a simple majority of the sample (14.0%) opted 'to some extent'. Thus, it can be inferred that Bahujan Movement in A.P. became a threat to political hegemony to a larger extent during 1999-2009 elections. Hence, the fifth hypothesis is rejected.

#### 1.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the present study are of practical as well as theoretical importance to the Research Scholars, People (voters), and Politicians.

#### 1.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

The present study is not much comprehensive and exhaustive due to the limitations of a doctoral work. There are some limitations in its scope and design. Thus, it is suggested that further investigations may be focused on the following issues: a similar study can be conducted with a larger sample to have in-depth knowledge of the electoral politics of Bahujan allies, especially in the State of Andhra Pradesh; there is a need to explore the execution of electoral promises made by the various political parties when they come to power; a comparative study can be taken up on the electoral politics of Bahujan allies in Uttar Pradesh with that of other States in the Indian Republic; a study can be taken on the perceptions of public representatives on the electoral politics of Bahujan allies in India; Another area for investigation would be on political hegemony in different States in the Indian Republic.

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