

**Political Parties: Marketing, Propaganda and Campaign-A Review of Uttar Pradesh
Assembly Elections 2017**

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The election system is the pillar of Indian democracy and political parties have to play a major role within this. The political scenario in Uttar Pradesh is taking a new shape as the assembly elections in the state are approaching. All the more, the political parties of all cadres have come out of their traditional outfit to influence and convince voters. Although communal politics remain in vogue in states like Uttar Pradesh since pre and post-independence era. It is anti-human and anti-secular democracy as well even then anyhow it has got an overwhelming control over the political scenario. It basically targets Muslims and keeps an eye on Christians also. Although Oxford Dictionary gives a very positive meaning of communal, that is 'shared by' especially by those who live together. But in India its meaning and references have become totally changed. A communal situation is characterized by tension or conflict between culturally distinct but geographically mixed communities and a very specific feature of Uttar Pradesh.

The Election Commission of India, as a part of its quasi-judicial jurisdiction settles disputes between the splinter groups of recognized parties. Election Commission ensures a level playing field for the political parties in election fray, through strict observance by them of a Model Code of Conduct evolved with the consensus of political parties.

The situation in Uttar Pradesh being a highly populous and economically divergent state is somewhere around to change its legacy by acknowledging on the political platform such parties which have remained in oblivion. It is a new phenomenon which has the potential of sustainability due to a unique class-mass convergence created by its mobilizations and governance agenda. Now they are getting recognized as an initiative which had the potential of becoming an alternative to the national parties with an attractive methodology of political mobilization beyond ideology through a new mix of traditional and ultra-modern ways of communication and collective action. The politics of Uttar Pradesh has got change by a democratic upsurge in participation in the political process by members of subordinate social groups. The ethnification of the party system

refers to the emergence of a party system in which all major parties make open appeals to ethnic identity central to their political campaigns.

Political propaganda is widely perceived to play an important role in shaping public opinion and political and policy outcomes. The voting behavior is highly affected and becomes responsive to the messages circulated through political campaigns and media framing. Voters are considerably more willing to participate in the election process after being visited by campaign workers. Voters in our country are exposed to a campaign encouraging those to vote based on policy rather than caste identity are more likely to vote, less likely to vote for their caste preferred party, and less likely to vote for politicians who are not accountable and responsible. Additionally this number is high in Uttar Pradesh.

Sometimes threats is also administered through social media to the dissenting individual but the development of a generalized culture of threats and violence that is the hallmark of such politics, and it is not unusual to see different arms of the state itself surrender to that logic. But here increases the scope for social media to decide its important role.

The objective of the present paper is to discuss about the politics of Uttar Pradesh as a state unit of Indian republic and to highlight changes which have come through the use of social media, marketing and propaganda which is being used by political parties and political agents as well.

The present paper is reviewing all those studies and advances in the system of bargaining, marketing, propaganda, campaigning techniques and supportive and negative use of social media in election process. Here we have taken Uttar Pradesh as a case study. It becomes more relevant as the Assembly elections are scheduled to be conducted in 2017. The status of pre-poll preparations will provide the data that may be used in different analytical areas.

Introduction

The Republic of India has 29 states among which Uttar Pradesh is the fourth largest Indian state by area and one of the most populated state in northern India. It is the third largest state by economy. As the assembly election is approaching in Uttar Pradesh in 2017 a huge number of political equations are coming into existence to mobilize the voters of different caste, communities, creed and religion. Although voters have their own choices and understanding of political parties and leaders about both Lok Sabha and assembly elections. They have different parameters to vote as well.

Uttar Pradesh having the largest number of seats in Lok Sabha inevitably becomes a crucial part of the process of government formation and catches the eye of all the senior leaders of different political parties from all over India. As it clearly seen in this eve of election leaders like Nitishkumar after a major victory in Bihar assembly elections is now concentrating in Uttar Pradesh political equations mainly focusing on the scheduled castes, backward castes and minorities and others to unite against national parties whether it is Congress or Bhartiya Janata Party, whosoever, comes in a winning position their united alliance has to challenge them. Somewhere aware of these groups to their existence the main instinct is to realize their own power to come to the ruling seat without any coalition. Now the question has not remained of caste but of groups' own existence. They have to be identical on the main surface. Identities tend to connect the voter with candidate not the parties. This also has a change in mindset of the voter. Two factors help with the conversion. One is voter's mobilization and awareness campaigns and the second is leaders establish an early rapport with the people through their oratory skills. The prospects of the coming elections are continuously changing.

Caste seems to be again emerging as a major mobilisational tactic in the run-up to the 2017 Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh. It reminds me of a folk proverb, '*Phir Baital Usi Daal Par* (The baital is sitting on the same branch again)'. Freedom fighter and ideologue of the socialist movement in India, Ram Manohar Lohia, had rightly pointed out that "*Indian politics is like an insurance policy. You do not have to invest any premium. Caste may be successfully used as and when required and it will yield back the premium with positive returns and added interest.*"

Political parties are inventing new methods of electoral polarisation of caste ahead of the elections. Parties in India have their '*base votes*', i.e. the votes of the caste that is powerful under the leadership of a particular party. In Uttar Pradesh, parties are exploring the possibility of '*stepney caste votes*' to add to their base votes by trying to enter into various kinds of alliances with different castes. In this way electoral democracy is turning into a '*Castocracy*' (*Jatitantra*). One of the strategies to garner stepney votes is by forming alliances with caste-based parties. Many numerically sizeable castes have formed their small caste-based political parties with which bigger political players such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Samajwadi Party (SP)

are forming alliances. Other parties are also becoming a part of it. Through propaganda not only negative things are being spread but also government schemes are making its reach up to a broader group of the people. They are in a position to know about the status of the party which is justifying its performance although one aspect is that not the exact figures are broadcasted through media but some modifications are done in favour of the political party which is contesting the next election.

The Wave: At Present

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has an alliance with the Apna Dal (considered to be the party of the Kurmis) and Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (considered to be the party of the Rajbhars). The talk in political circles is that the BJP is working to stitch similar alliances in eastern Uttar Pradesh with the Janvadi Party and other small parties which are influential among most backward castes such as Lonia, Nonia, Gole-Thakur, Lonia-Chauhan and Dhobhi. The Samajwadi Party is likely to form alliance with the Rashtriya Lok Dal (considered to be the party of the Jats). The political propaganda behind all these equations is to expose ourself as a party with inclusive approach to maintain the interests of diverse sections of the society while the fact is quite different to these notions and absolutely in favour of accessing their votes only.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) strategy is to focus on the non-Jatav Dalit votes and non-Yadav backward caste votes to add to their core *Savarna* (forward caste) vote bank. To appease its *savarna* base, the BJP is offering them representation at the organisational level and showcasing its commitment towards Brahminical-Hindutva agendas such as the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya. But more importantly, the party is targeting backward castes and Dalit castes. Taking a leaf out of the Bahujan Samaj Party's (BSP) playbook, the BJP is luring these castes by providing organisational representation, organising caste-based rallies, celebrating festivals in the memory of their heroes and constructing their temples. For the first time it has ensured reservation in posts in the various party committees from booth level to the State level and assigned responsibilities to Dalits, backwards and women. By naming Keshav Prasad Maurya as its State unit president, the party has signalled the importance of castes such as

Maurya, Murav and Kachhi to its scheme of things. Plans are also afoot to rope in former Chief Minister Kalyan Singh and his son Rajbir for campaigning in order to win Lodh-Nishad votes.

As we see with barely a few months left for the crucial assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh the BhartiyaJanta Party led National Democratic Alliance and its chief opposition Congress seemed to have taken a lead over state parties Samajwadi Party (SP) and BahujanSamajwadi Party (BSP) in poll preparations. The BhartiyaJanta Party appears to have already kickstarted their campaign with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party national president Amit Shah holding events in the state. They have begun touring the state by meeting booth presidents' from Bundelkhand region on June 4, 2016, followed by Kasganj, Meerut (western Area), Barabanki, Lucknow (Awadh Area), Basti, Gorakhpur and Jaunpur (Eastern Area). He is also focused on catching some dalit votes to maintain the social engineering and for this purpose addressed a Dalits convention in Lucknow on June 4, 2016, a Jan Swabhiman rally in Varanasi on July 2, 2016 and '*Atidalit-ati-pichdamahapanchayat*' (extreme Dalit-most backward meet) in Mau (Eastern Area). These events were targeted to prove other parties like Congress (United Progressive Alliance) and BahujanSamajwadiParty to be corrupt when they were in office and the Samajwadi Party on the 'failing' law and order situation in the state. He also blamed the Samajwadi Party for the alleged 'exodus' of Hindus from Kairana and the recent violence in Mathura that left 24 dead. The issues of land-grabbing mafia were strongly highlighted against the ruling party.

With a focus on backward caste voters it is also being announced that alliances will be made with other backward castes-backed Apna Dal and SuheldeoBharatiyaSamaj Party (SBSP) for the 2017 polls. Earlier it was addressed in the Sardar Patel KisanMahasammelan in other backward castes dominated Jhansi of Allahabad on May 31, after having lunch with backward castes and Dalits at the residence of other backward castes (OBC) party worker in Varanasi.

With an eye on Uttar Pradesh polls, the parties are holding their national executive meet in various parts of the state where all the top party leaders are showing personal interest to attend that and address the issues as it has become a matter of prestige which party can use as much means like campaigning and making propaganda of those issues which seems less important as possible to take the maximum percentage of vote in favour. The BhartiyaJanta Party concluded the meet with a grand show of strength at the 'parivartan rally', where they appealed to the people to break the sequence of 'SP-BSP-SP-BSP-SP' governments and vote them to power in 2017.

The Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi has launched the ambitious PradanMantriUjjwalaYojana from Ballia district of Eastern Uttar Pradesh on May 1, 2016. To mark completion of two-years of his government, PM Modi addressed a rally on May 26, 2016 in Saharanpur, which falls in communally sensitive western Uttar Pradesh.

To make the pre-poll campaign more aggressive, BJP has planned to take out four yatras from different places in the state. The minor details of these yatras were decided at the state executive meet. The parties also announce their new increasing member state teams where the majority of the members are under 50 years of age. The team comprises of 13 leaders from communally sensitive western UP and 10 from Eastern UP, including four from Prime Minister's Lok Sabhaconstituency Varanasi. Keeping the caste equations in mind, the team has accommodated Brahmins, Thakur, Vaishya, other backward class and Dalits.

Dalit Card

BahujanSamajwadi Party (BSP) which is the main proponent of dalits rights and mainstreaming of politics has been the first political party that started preparations for the 2017 assembly elections by declaring its candidates as early as 2015. It was in a strong position against the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) until the roles were reversed with the exit of the party's Other Backward Caste face Swami Prasad Maurya and Dalit leader R.K. Chaudhary. Both accused Mayawati of 'auctioning' party tickets for assembly polls and their exit was followed by RavindraNathTripathi and Paramdev Yadav.

In a damage control exercise, the BahujanSamajwadi Party (BSP) has selected five of its leaders, all from different backward castes for leading the party's outreach campaign in their respective caste groups. The five leaders are former MLCs R. S.Kushwaha, Pratap Singh Baghel, Virendra Singh Chauhan, former Member of Parliament R. K. Singh and Member of Legislative Council Mr. Suresh Kashyap. Kushwaha has been tasked with reaching out to Kushwaha-Maurya and related caste groups in central and eastern U.P. while Baghel will mobilise Gaderiya-Pal-Baghel community in Agra and Aligarh (western U.P.). Chauhan will work to mobilise the Other Backward Caste Lonia-Chauhan caste in eastern U.P., Patel has been asked to contact Kurmis in Bundelkhand while Kashyap will woo the Kashyap-Nishad caste group. Ms. Mayawati has deputed general secretary Naseemuddin Siddiqui to woo Muslim voters by targeting western and eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh. As a replacement for Maurya, Ms. Mayawati picked four-time MLA from Bundelkhand Gaya CharanDinkar — a Dalit — as Leader of Opposition in Uttar Pradesh Assembly. Also in the recent Rajya Sabha polls, she selected another

community leader, Ashok Sidharth, while picking her party's national general secretary Satish Chandra Mishra, a Brahmin, as the second nominee.

However, another cause of worry for Ms. Mayawati is ticket distribution. She had declared candidates for more than 300 seats in the past one year, but repeatedly change of nominees is likely to cause more friction within the party. All these party members at the same time started their political campaign from social media to make a divergent approach to different sections of the society even then a majority part of the core vote bank of this party remains aloof from the social networking sites and only the traditional means of campaigning work on them.

Ms. Mayawati has also directed party nominees and prospective candidates to visit Dalit bastis and also asked leaders to revive BAMCEF (Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation) — a shadow organisation of Dalit government employees, to counter BhartiyaJanta Party and Congress' efforts to reach out to the community. The leadership has also focused to attract various castes in the 85 reserved seats of the state, which have the largest Dalit population and where party had often failed to perform, owing to lack of support from non-Dalit groups. Out of the 85 reserved constituencies, BahujanSamajwadi Party (BSP) had won only 15 in 2012 Assembly elections. While Samajwadi Party (SP) had won 58, Congress followed with four, BhartiyaJanata Party three, RastriyaLokDal three and independents two.

Congress Cry

Indian National Congress, the oldest party in India its top two leaders —All India Congress Committee (AICC) president Sonia Gandhi and vice-president Rahul Gandhi — are Lok Sabha members from Uttar Pradesh and both have limited their presence in the state to their respective constituencies, Rae Bareli and Amethi, in past two years. After appointing Ghulam Nabi Azad as in-charge of Uttar Pradesh, the party has picked actor-turned politician Raj Babbar as the new state chief and appointed four leaders as senior vice-presidents. The second rung in Uttar Pradesh include former Member of Parliament Rajesh Mishra (Brahmin) from Varanasi, Other Backward Class leader Raja Ram Pal, Scheduled Caste leader Bhagwati Prasad Chaudhary and controversial Muslim leader of western Uttar Pradesh Imran Masood.

It is speculated that the party has been searching for a Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader in Uttar Pradesh Assembly along with a leader to head party's campaign committee for 2017 Assembly polls. While the party has hired poll strategist Prashant Kishor who has been working in the state from almost four months, Congress has decided to bring Priyanka Gandhi Vadra out of the '*family pocket borough*'— Amethi and Rae Bareli— for campaigning in other parts

of the state. The party is also planning to hold public meetings in Lucknow and Allahabad, including one that will be the biggest political event of the party in the history of Uttar Pradesh. Presently, the party is collecting information about issues prevailing in districts and seats that are winnable.

Socialism Ruleout

Present Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Mr. Akhilesh Yadav at the helm, the Samajwadi Party is turning out to be the least active among other parties preparing for assembly polls. The party began its poll preparations on March 24, 2016 by releasing a list of 142 candidates for seats where party had lost in the 2012 election. But for the past one month, Samajwadi Party leaders have been locked in an internal battle. Somehow they claim to provide good governance and development to the state but the scenario before the assembly elections does not seem to be sound and focused.

Samajwadi Party's newly appointed state in-charge Shivpal Singh Yadav announced the merger of QuamiEkta Dal (QED), but Akhilesh, who was against the move, expressed his 'displeasure' by sacking minister Balram Yadav, who initiated talks with QuamiEkta Dal. Samajwadi Party's Central Parliamentary Party called off the merger and convinced Chief Minister to re-induct Balram in cabinet.

While sources said that Akhilesh does not want a pre-poll alliance, Shivpal also approached RashtriyaLok Dal (RLD) Chief Ajit Singh for a tie-up. The move benefitted Samajwadi Party as RashtriyaLok Dal Member of Legislative Aassembly voted for Samajwadi Party candidates in Rajya Sabha and Member of Legislative Council polls last month.

Samajwadi Party has announced that Akhilesh will soon take out SamajwadiVikasRathYatra across the state but the dates are yet to be decided. Samajwadi Party has also announced to hold its national executive meet in Lucknow this month but date is yet to be finalised. Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav recently deputed 36 Member of Legislative Council to conduct a secret survey in all 403 Assembly constituencies and produce a report of winning prospects of the party's candidates. He has also asked Member of Legislative Council and Zilla Panchayat chairpersons to take responsibility of at least one assembly segment and ensure that the party candidates win in 2017.

Media Role

The role of media has got a tremendous change. We can see the example of pre-poll

survey in which through some electoral agents political parties try to make an aura that they are winning and all those voters which are seeing that or have been a part of it tend to think about voting that party so that their vote should not go waste. It is sometimes intentional and sometimes paid also. Another factor that works in Uttar Pradesh very effectively is giving allurements just as distributing laptops and conversion of non-permanent to permanent for a certain period of time. Although judiciary keep vigil on that and such allurements decisions are strictly scrutinized and taken aback also when required. Muscular power of the candidate is also getting spread through media and social networking. The figures of their crime portfolio and potential strength is widely discussed and gets weightage.

Campaigning Strategy

The strategies of the campaigning electronically and manually both are being changed as per the requirement of the changing political power equations within the system. Class and caste strategies are also part of it as they play very dominating role in deciding the political future in Uttar Pradesh. Although it can be said as 'charisma of democracy' and it is also changing power centers. Social media is changing the traditional viewpoint of campaigning and opening broad network to reach the people of different mentality as it is crucial to know the understanding level of the voters to divert their opinions and the all race targets to mobilize the voters and the techniques change from election to election.

Way Ahead

The moment we think in terms of winning communities on the basis of paying them price in form of political power, you sow the seeds of separation. This statement is truly explaining about the actual existing political environment of Uttar Pradesh. The most interesting fact here is while we see the furore of elections in other states or different parts of the country we see a variety of things being used as a political gimmick such as factors of development and technological advancements but sarcastically the status of Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections is quite different from others as we see here that caste card is being encashed and as a tool of marketing the ideology of the political parties its use in different angles has remained successful. Communal harmony is the main target that must be achieved in a state like Uttar Pradesh on the contrary here campaigning is done to poisoning the mind of the voters towards others. Marketing of political parties is done like a product and it is raising the customer tendency

within the voters that is noted as a bigger change in the democratic mindset. This is not a progressive sign for democracy. But the picture here is not gloomy only is it moving through the transitional phase where every phenomenon is experimental and subject to change.

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