

The Silence before Storm Rise of Tejaswi Yadav in Bihar

Shiekh Qazafee Hassan*

Shri Venkateshwara University, Amroha, India

Abstract: The Bihar assembly election of 2020 was one of the most interesting election in India as it can determine the future course of politics in India in the centre as well as in the states or UT'S. The Bihar election has proved to be interesting due to the close neck-to-neck fight between the Mahagathbandan (MGB) and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The rise of Tejaswi is seen as the most prolific outcome of this election.

Keywords: Alliance, Caste, Democratic, Election, Politics.

1. Introduction

Tejaswi yadav the new heartthrob of Bihar. Tejaswi Yadav has brought crowd in huge numbers as witnessed in his rallies as nobody was expecting this type of outcome from a young 31 year old man has attracted such a huge crowd particularly the youth. The promises that Tejaswi made in his election manifesto has attracted the youth who promised about 10 lakh employment will be given in his tenure if got opportunity to be elected. The exit polls showed from various organisations showed landslide victory to Mahagathbandan and everybody was expecting the same will happen. The news television debates, experts and ground reality were also depicting the landslide victory of Mahagathbandan. The Bihar assembly election of 2020 was one of the most interesting election in India as it can determine the future course of politics in India in the centre as well as In the state's or UT'S. The Bihar election has proved to be interesting due to the close neck-to-neck fight between the Mahagathbandan (MGB) consisting of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Congress and the Left parties, and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), consists of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Janata Dal (United) and smaller parties, the Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular), Vikassheel Insaan Party and the

The covid pandemic has shown its colour in every sphere of life and that is also evident in Bihar elections. The counting of votes took very long time almost 19 hrs to declare the results; the results show that the NDA, despite the exit polls, has prevailed with 125 seats, the MGB closely behind gaining 110. Within the NDA, however, the BJP spearheaded the elections with 74 seats emerging as the bigger partner, the JD (U) sliding down to 43. The other parties within the National Democratic Alliance, the HAM and the VIP won 4 seats each. The Rashtriya Janata Dal emerged as the single largest party with

77 seats; however the Congress obtained a mere 19 seats. In fact, the Left parties performed far better, of the 29 seats contested, it won 16, with the CPI (ML) winning 12 of them. The AIMIM of Asaduddin Owaisi effectively cut into the seats of the MGB in the Seemanchal region by dividing the Muslim vote. The last phase of the counting proved controversial, the margin of victory in many seats being very narrow. The RJD has alleged that returning officers has not done their duty fairly and was been influenced from the ruling alliance and not been fair, however the Election Commission has held that election were held in transparent manner and the counting of votes are also done according to the procedure and no unfair means has been done. Despite the results in favour of NDA Alliance on ground the reality seems to be different in Bihar. Winning elections by very fair margin gave clear idea that Bihar is in favour of change. However, the results do not reflect ground realities in Bihar today. Despite the victory of the NDA, what is significant in this election is the emergence and key role played by Tejaswi Yadav in the election campaign, and the tough challenge he was able to throw at the NDA.

At the beginning of the Election campaign, most observers had held that the NDA and its allies will win comfortably; the RJD without the presence of Lalu Prasad Yadav was not viewed as a serious contender. However, closer to the election, Tejaswi successfully turned the narrative in his favour, evident from the huge, enthusiastic crowds that turned up for his rallies. One of the key feature of this election was that despite NDA and its alliance has targeted the RJD'S Lalu Prasad yadav of jungle raj, tejaswi yadav never pay heed and overcome the allegation raised by the counterparts that was the key feature of this young sod, who tactfully gave a befitting reply to the counterparts without getting into the trouble by remaining focused on the agenda that attracted the youth and the bihar's population. Nitish kumar the old veteran of JDU was not welcomed that much as witnessed by the very small crowds and time and again losing his cool every now and then. Nitish kumar who has ruled bihar from last 15 years seemed very jittery at times.

*Corresponding author: qazu786@gmail.com

2. Narendar Modi and Yogi Adityanath Came to Rescue to JDU and its Allies

Prime Minister and Yogi Adityanath came in forefront in the election rallies in order to defend the incumbent chief minister Nitish Kumar. However it is viewed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has saved Nitish Kumar and turned the favour of election at the last moment. However it has been seen that the Modi wave is coming down and losing its sheen as it was evident in the previous election. Modi factor cannot be ruled out at any cost as PM MODI is considered as the savior of this govt at the latest moment. The recent Bihar assembly election results have positioned the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as a key political force in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and in the state, catapulted the Rashtriya Janata Dal's (RJD) Tejashwi Yadav to the position of a key opposition face and electorally weakened Nitish Kumar-led Janata Dal (United). In an interview with Mint, Sanjay Kumar, professor at the New Delhi-based think tank, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies-Lokniti, explains what the outcome means for key political stakeholders.

3. Caste and Development: New Equations

Caste is a social phenomenon of Indian society. By participating in the modern political system, caste is now exposed to divisive influences and a new form of integration resulting from a new scheme of universalist-particularistic relationships. Caste has gained an influential position in India politics. On the one hand, a structure of divisions and accommodations, caste provides to politics. And on the other hand a cohesive element which absorbs tensions and frustrations. It becomes divisive when question arises of national unity. But regarding a locality or group matter, it gives a cohesive force by uniting people of a caste. The formation role of caste association is also playing an important role in influencing voting pattern. Even political parties are considering caste as a vote bank. This enabled the lower castes to be politically influential on the basis of numerical preponderance. In selecting candidates for elections, political parties often are giving consideration to the caste composition of constituencies. Sometimes several castes are using politics in their attempt to better their conditions or to achieve their goal. Reservation policy is another aspect where we can see that caste system also influences Indian politics.

While analysis of this complex election, and its impact on politics in Bihar will take time. The emergence of Tejashwi as a young, popular leader, and the better than expected showing of the RJD, which has emerged with 75 seats as the single largest party ahead of the BJP, points to seminal changes in the social and political arena of Bihar. While caste has been recognised as the most important issue that has traditionally determined voting and election results in Bihar. This does not seem true this time; the election has been described as 'caste-plus'. The reasons lie in significant, longer-term developments in the Hindi heartland in the 2000s, including in Bihar. While, the 1990s were a period when identity politics drove electoral and mass politics, evident in the rule of Lalu Prasad. In the

2000s, the waning of identity politics led to a new equation between caste and development which is reflected in electoral politics. Caste, and identity alignments based on it, had been weakening since the late 1990s, and it was no longer the only factor that determines electoral politics, a rising aspiration for material advancement and improvement becoming evident. Bihar is a backward state and economic reform compared to states in southern and western India, did not lead to higher growth. Regimes in the 1990s and early 2000s were unable to put forth effective policies for development. On the other hand, the 2000s witnessed the emergence of a small, educated, assertive, younger generation, together with aspiration for upward mobility among the poorer sections. These shifts created a desire for economic advancement among large sections of the population no longer happy with what came to be described as "Jungle Raj" under Lalu Prasad. This was evident in the victory of Nitish Kumar together with the BJP in 2015, obtaining 206 seats, reducing the RJD to 22. The development work undertaken by Nitish during this period particularly in building roads and infrastructure and improving law and order won him support.

His second term as chief minister in 2015 with the support of the RJD and subsequent shift to the NDA in 2017, continuing until 2020, has not been viewed as positively by the electorate. While still viewed as 'Sushasan Babu' during the early part of this period, the lack of improvement in education, problems in his prohibition policy, allegations of corruption and lack of investment and jobs, led to disillusionment. In sum, while some development did take place it was slower; but Nitish had heightened aspirations, which in a backward state like Bihar, he could not fulfil in a short period.

Against this backdrop of rising aspirations for material advancement, in the present election two issues have been important: unemployment and migration; both of which had by all reports created tremendous anger within the electorate. The two are related as both lead to a search for livelihood outside Bihar. An educated, younger generation is upset that despite having earned a degree they had to go to Delhi, Mumbai or Bangalore to get a job in the IIT sector, business or industry. Similarly, the uneducated, often backward or 'lower' caste, workers had to migrate to cities to obtain jobs as construction labour or in the service industry, mostly in the informal sector.

4. Covid 19 Aftermath

The COVID-19 pandemic led to reverse migration and a rush back home in March 2020 due to the severe lockdown. Media reports show that by June 2020, over 67 lakh migrants returned to 116 districts in six states from urban centers. Of them, about 44 lakh, or nearly two-thirds, returned to 53 districts. Bihar topped the six states with 23.6 lakh returning to 32 districts, followed by UP with 17.48 lakh to 31 districts.

As no jobs were available in Bihar towns or villages, apart from limited employment under MREGA, most remained unemployed, and as timely government aid did not reach many, hungry and desperate. While some of the skilled and semi-skilled labour has returned to their former jobs as industries have gradually begun to open-up, unskilled labour has not been

as successful in finding jobs in the cities and remains unemployed and unable to send home money to their families. During the campaign, both the educated unemployed, and the migrant workers who had returned home, agreed that Nitish Kumar built roads and provided them electricity and drinking water. But as some pointed out, roads are of not much use if they do not lead to an office, industry or institution that gives them jobs. It is suitable employment and a living wage that the voter is demanding today. It is interesting that surveys show that the migrants did not blame the central government or PM Modi for their plight. They argued that Modi had sent funds and food to Bihar but it was the local administration and state government, which was corrupt and lax in giving them the aid sent for them. The migrants are angry that Nitish Kumar did not look after them when they lost their jobs and walked home hungry from their place of employment to their homes in Bihar. They point out that the UP CM sent buses to Delhi to take home labour belonging to the state, and by the time trains were provided many were already walking or unable to catch them or, some had even reached home spending their savings. Modi remains a popular figure, untouched by the disaster the COVID-19 pandemic wrought on their lives, a 'doer' and messiah, working hard to look after their needs. This helps explain the better performance of the BJP and the lesser number of seats obtained by the JD (U).

5. Conclusion Tejashwi, Future Potential

It is in this context that the rise of Tejashwi assumes significance as he represents a younger generation, who see in him a new leader who understands their hopes and needs. His promise of 10 lakh jobs, half of them in the government raised high hopes and led to enthusiastic crowds at his short, 13 to 15 daily rallies. He spoke entirely about local issues and needs, which the crowd could relate with and respond. The Manifesto of the MGB reflected the demands and needs of the people such as jobs, better education, inflation and better governance. His description of the RJD, as no longer an 'MY' party of Muslims and Yadavs, but as an A-to-Z party including all sections of society, also appealed. He did not criticise the PM or central policies, or take up issues such as the Ram Mandir or Article 370 in the context of Jammu and Kashmir. Nor did he use the patron-client style of the Congress in its heyday promising garibi hatao. Rather, he deployed a new narrative different from that of the Mandal period, constantly emphasising the need to move from social to economic justice.

However, despite the interest Tejashwi aroused, leading to large crowds, it does seem that he was not able to convince his audience that he could fulfil their aspirations and provide them good governance. The constant refrain of BJP leaders that victory of the RJD would mean return of the Jungle Raj of the Lalu period, did not help particularly among the upper castes and the older generation. Modi's emphasis, that a 'double engine' sarkar would help Bihar, proved useful. Equally important, was the poor image of the Congress which has not had much of a presence in Bihar for a long time; its under-performance effectively pulled down the MBG tally.

Consequently, the electorate remained divided between the BJP, JD (U) and the RJD and Congress, creating a close fight between the NDA and the MGB. Yet, in the words of Tejashwi during a campaign interview that "age is on my side" means that he has time to mobilise and create greater support for himself and his party, and emerge as an important leader in Bihar. The Bihar election provides two takeaways for all political parties. Caste alignments by themselves no longer attract the electorate, material advancement has become important. Tejashwi's absolute focus on economic issues and local needs during the campaign almost propelled the RJD to victory. The NDA, whether under Nitish or a new leader, will have to meet the rising expectations of the people who are learning to punish parties that do not perform. A second takeaway is that strong and effective alliances are needed in the states to take on the challenge of the Modi-led BJP juggernaut, even where the BJP may not have strong state level leaders. In sum, the Bihar election has many pointers for political parties and their leaders attempting to hold on to their regional strongholds, the next test being West Bengal.

References

- [1] References Blair, Harry W. 1972. 'Ethnicity and Democratic politics in India: Caste as a Differential Mobilizer in Bihar', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 107-27, 1978.
- [2] Colonial Perceptions of Indian Society and the Emergence of Caste(s) Associations', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 233-50, 2001.
- [3] Social Power and Everyday Class Relations: Agrarian Transformation in North Bihar. New Delhi: Sage Publications. Chatterjee, Partha, 2008.
- [4] Chaudhary, Prasann Kumar and Shrikant. 'Democracy and Economic Transformation in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 43, no. 16, April 18, 2001.
- [5] Bihar mein Samajik Parivartan ke kuchh Aayam. New Delhi: Vani Prakashan. Frankel, Francine R. 1989.
- [6] 'Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar: Breakdown of the Brahmanical Social Order', in Francine R. Frankel and M S A Rao (eds.). *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order (Volume I)*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 46-132. Fuller, C. J. and V. Beni (eds.). *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India*. New Delhi: Social Science Press. Gupta, Akhil. 1997.
- [7] *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. Gupta, Dipankar. 2005.
- [8] Caste and Politics: Identity over System', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 34: 409-27, 2000. *Interrogating Caste: Understanding Hierarchy and Difference in Indian Society*. New Delhi: Penguin Books. Hauser, Walter. 1997.
- [9] Changing Images of Caste and Politics', *Seminar*, 450: 47-52. Jaffrelot, Christophe. 2003. *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of Low Castes in North Indian Politics*. Delhi: Permanent Black. Kothari, Rajni. 1970a. *Politics in India*. Delhi: Orient Longman. Kothari, Rajni. 1970b. *Caste and Politics in India*. Delhi: Orient Longman. Kunnath, George J. 2006.
- [10] Becoming a Naxalite in Rural Bihar: Class Struggle and its Contradictions', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 33 (1) 89-123. Michelutti, Lucia. 2008.
- [11] *The Vernacularisation of Democracy: Politics, Caste and Religion in India*. New Delhi: Routledge, Taylor and Francis. Pouchepadass, Jacques. 1999.
- [12] Champaran and Gandhi: Planters, Peasants and Gandhian Politics. Delhi: Oxford University Press. Roy, Ramashray. 1968. 'Dynamics of One-Party Dominance in an Indian State', *Asian Survey*, vol. 8, no. 7, pp. 553-75, 1966.
- [13] Ruud, Arild Engelsen. 2000. 'Talking Dirty about Politics: A View from a Bengali Village'. In C. J. Fuller and V. Beni (eds.). *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India*. New Delhi: Social Science Press. 'Intra-party Conflict in the Bihar Congress', *Asian Survey*, vol. 6, no. 12, pp. 706-15.