

MOOD OF THE STATE: UTTAR PRADESH

NOW AND 2014

PEOPLE'S PULSE, a Hyderabad-based research organization, carried out a fairly extensive study in Uttar Pradesh, a year after the Assembly polls, to capture the political processes in India's largest state with a focused objective of understanding the various shades of people's perception about government. The study was conducted from January 4 to 18, 2013, by Sajjan Kumar (Ph.D. Research Scholar, Centre for Political Studies, JNU) with the assistance of Abdul Mughni (Ph.D. Research Scholar, School of International Studies, JNU). Responses for the study were drawn from across the state covering 32 districts and 35 Lok Sabha constituencies paying due attention to all the regions -- Western, Central, Eastern and Bundelkhand.

The study primarily aimed to locate the findings within the complex framework of "Region-Religion-Caste" to get a better understanding of the peculiarities of political positions of various regions as well as certain sameness in the same.

I: The study revolved around the themes of governance as perceived by people with special attention to issues like determinants of voting behavior, why a particular party loses power, how do people see the government and the state, people's perception regarding the position and prospects of various political parties in the coming general election, people's position w.r.t the complex web of Hindutva-Casteism and Secularism and the functioning of local institutions like Panchayats.

II: The study also aimed to find out the major problems that the people were facing, how they are coping with them and the role being played by their political representatives: Pradhans, M.L.As and M.Ps in addressing them.

III: A special attention was paid to determine the views of the people of various region in the state on the question whether U.P should be divided into smaller states or not. In this aspect an additional dimension was also explored to bring out the perception of the people of one region about the other.

IV: Given the presence of many national leaders who are elected from various Lok Sabha constituencies in the state, we paid special attention to assess the various shades of images that the leaders enjoy in their respective constituencies. The workings of the factors that determine their winnability from those electoral seats are some of the highlights of this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study used ethnographic method based on an open ended interview system. In the time span of 15 days, 32 districts and 35 Lok Sabha constituencies were covered involving travel for more than 3200 km. Several group interviews were held involving people from across the social, demographic as well as regional constituencies.

The study followed the method of choosing a time interval of 30 minutes in between two interviews. Similarly, one interview, on an average, lasted around 30-40 minutes. The structure of the interview though open-ended, method evolved from some general questions to more particular ones. Based on ethnographic method, the social background (caste/community and religion) of the interviewees were established to determine the interface of caste/religion and political perception.

Moreover, the study was conducted within the complex framework of region-religion and caste, to determine as to how the three interact leading to various political positions. Further, the relative importance of region as compared to religion and caste was also tested by comparing the views of all sections in a particular region to that of the respondents of other region in the state.

The variables like “political culture”, “political rhetoric”, “development”, “governance”, “social justice”, “criminalization of politics”, “client-patron politics”, “identity politics”, “demand and command polity”, were extensively used and were contextualized in the present political condition of the state as seen by the people themselves.

Apart from interview method, the study, as a prelude, has also used the primary sources like “election manifestos” of various political parties, “speeches” of important leaders from the states along with the secondary sources like “newspaper reports” before commencing on the fieldwork.

MAIN FINDINGS

PEOPLE’S ASSESMENT ON AKHILESH YADAV’S ONE-YEAR RULE

One of the Objectives of the study was to ascertain the views of the electorates as to how they view the performance of the Akhilesh Yadav government at the end of the one year.

A lot has been written about the reasons why the BSP has lost power and what are the factors that brought the Samajwadi Party to power in the elections held last year. While that is history now, the experience of people with the new government over the past year is certainly not music to the ears of Akhilesh Yadav.

LAW & ORDER: The study found strong responses w.r.t the collapse of law & order machinery. Some common responses were that hooliganism has escalated under S.P's rule and that there is open "Gundagardi". Interestingly, the study didn't find a single exception to this aspect. There were too many tales of how in the last one year after Samajvadi Party came into power, the fear of law has vanished and lumpen elements are acting with a sense of impunity. Incidents like murder, looting, and kidnapping are on rise.

ELECTRICITY: The respondents opined that there has been a serious decline in the availability of electricity. Except for Rampur wherein senior S.P leader Azam Khan ensures a steady supply of electricity, the rest of the state seems to be having a scant supply of the same sometimes merely for 4-5 hours a day.

ELECTORAL PROMISES: As everyone knows, one of the main factors for the success of SP at the hustings were the electoral promises it made offering something to almost every section of the society --- farmers, youth, students, unemployed, women, minorities. But the general impression, as gathered from the insights of the respondents, seems to be that of betrayal. Apparently, some agricultural loans have been waived off but farmers pointed out that this benefit was given only to those who have taken loans from "BHOOMI VIKAS BANK". Most farmers obtained loans from other banks. In fact, it was pointed out that "Bhoomi Vikas Bank" is like a cartel wherein only influential farmers get the loan. Similarly, Akhilesh Yadav government has announced onetime scholarship to girl students who have completed their Xth and XIIth. But it was alleged that it was mere symbolic as very few girl students were given the same (Rs 30,000) and secondly most of the those who benefited hailed from Muslim community that led to the anger among the non-Muslims. Ironically, even Muslim respondents complained that the scholarship was given to a chosen few. But the sense of betrayal was most entrenched among youth who were promised a monthly unemployment allowance of Rs. 1000. Similarly, promises of free laptops and tablets to students are now

considered a joke. The general sense of disenchantment and a sense of betrayal from the state government get captured in one of the respondents who lightly remarked that **AKHILESH YADAV IS NOT A CHIEF MINISTER BUT A PROMISE MINISTER.** (Akhilesh Mukhya Mantri nahi GHOSHANA Mantri hai). Similarly, one of the respondents at Banka metaphorically said in vernacular hindi that “**Akhilesh ne Gud Dikha Kar Dhela Fek Dia**” (he showed us JAGGERY BUT THREW BRICK on us)!!

EMPLOYMENT FACTOR: The high level of unemployment in the absence of avenues for employment like lack of Industries, inadequate number of jobs and stagnation of agriculture as an engaging profession has not changed, resulting in migration to other states. In the last one year, there has been no visible attempt to establish new units or revive industries that have been shut over the years for a variety of reasons.

DALITS vs. NON-DALITS: Most of the Dalit respondents were of the view that their situation has worsened after Samajwadi Party assumed power. A frequent complaint was that there has been a rise in atrocities being committed on dalits (Hamare Upar Julm Badha Hai Is Sarkar Me)!! This fact was corroborated by the non-Dalit respondents but in an unsympathetic manner. The study found many instances of discriminatory policy of the present government against Dalits. For instance, electricity and water supply arranged for “Kanshiram colony” at JHANSI by the previous B.S.P government to benefit dalits and EBCs has been cut off. Similarly, Ambedkar villages are abandoned by the present regime. Instead, “Rammanohar Lohia Samagra Gram” are the new ideal villages that are patronized by the government wherein dalits are on the margins as most of the benefits are deliberately being accrued to non-dalits, mainly OBCs. This fact was evident in one of the villages, KAPEDKATKA, which has been promoted as “Dr. Rammanohar Lohia Samagra Gram” in Shahjahanpur. Out of the 35 new houses that will be constructed by the government not a single house belongs to a dalit though the village has a mixed population. Similarly, the non-Dalits (Muslims and Upper castes

included) were either aloof or supportive of the recent stand taken by Mulayam Singh Yadav/Samajvadi Party against the “SC/ST Promotion Bill in Public Employment”. There were few non-Dalits who found fault with S.P’s/Mulayam Singh Yadav’s stand on that issue. Thus, the popular impression that the present regime in the state is inherently anti-dalit has some merit as the ground situation reflects.

MUSLIMS vs. NON-MUSLIMS: In the last one year, it seems the “Hindu-Muslim” divide is on the rise though in a subtle manner not due to BJP’s hindutva politics but rather due to some pro-Muslim policies followed by the present Samajvadi Party government. In fact this feeling, though undercurrent, is so strong that seemingly two politically adversary castes in the state, “DALITS AND YADAVS”, were found to be having the same impression that the present state government is working only for the Muslims. For instance, in HAPUR, a young Jatav (S.C) respondent remarked that Akhilesh government is working only for Muslim girls (a reference to 30,0000/ scholarship given to Muslim girls who pass 10th class). Similarly, in Mulayam Singh Yadav’s bastion, a Yadav respondent complained that “S.P government is working only for the Muslims. Their girls get money in marriages. They get money after passing 10th. For Hindus there is nothing.” Thus the political situation in the coming days seems to be revolving around the old factor of “Hindu-Muslim” divide though in a different manner.

DEVELOPMENT FACTOR: As stated above, in the last one year there hasn’t been any improvement insofar as employment creation is concerned. Be it the condition of roads, irrigation, health facilities or setting up industries, there has been no effort. On the other hand, one can see the mushrooming of “professional educational institutions” whose main motive is to make money rather than improve the education in general for the larger public. Sarcastically, one of the respondents said that Mulayam spends all the money in his own village SAFAI that looks like the center of a metropolis.

MAJOR PROBLEMS:

Price Rise remains the biggest problem followed by “Gundagardi”, “Unemployment”, “Extremely short supply of electricity”, “Bad condition of roads”, “Drought (more acute in Bundelkhand region), “ Security of women”.

BSP and SP GOVERNMENTS: A COMPARITIVE STUDY

Based on the responses gathered from the people and other observations, an inference can be drawn that, broadly speaking, the previous B.S.P/Mayavati government and the present Akhilesh Yadav/S.P government are the **alter ego of one another**.

While the Mayawati government was considered to be synonymous with **corruption**, the present S.P government is considered to be coterminous with **“Gundagardi”**. **Secondly**, the while the BSP government was seen as aggressively empowering dalits at the cost of non-dalits, the present government is perceived to be doing the reverse. With regard to Law and Order, the Mayawati’s administration was still considered to be **strict** while the S.P regime is seen as **ineffective**.

Ironically, w.r.t democratic space, there is an unanimity that during Mayavati’s time it was a personalized rule wherein except for her no one mattered in front of the high level bureaucratic administration as even most of MLAs from her own party were powerless and had no impact. In other words, it was an authoritarian style of functioning. But the present government gives the impression of a chaotic system wherein every political agent considers himself to be the government. Thus it seems that an **authoritarian way of administration** has been replaced by a **chaotic way of administration** rather than a democratic one.

At the level of politics of symbols, while Mayavati government used the icon of “Ambedkar” to assert its commitment to Social Justice, the S.P government is using the icon of “Rammanohar Lohia” to assert its own brand of Social Justice. Thus, it’s one version of Social Justice against the other. It’s like **pitting Ambedkar against Lohia** that is interpreted by people as the assertion of dalits and OBCs against each other.

2014 ELECTION: PROSPECTS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

NARENDRA MODI AND BJP: The enigma of Narendra Modi seems to be working in Uttar Pradesh as strongly as in Gujarat at least going by the responses of people across the state. He is one factor that creates fault lines, unites and divides, unsettles the normal political equation and creates new ones among the social polity of the state. Barring a few exceptions, the study found overwhelming enthusiasm for Narendra Modi among all sections of Hindus and a sense of alertness among Muslims.

The enthusiasm for Modi in most of the cases is not mainly for his “Hindutva” image but rather for his image as a “VIKAS PURUSH”. But a close engagement with the respondents in most of the cases betrays their underlying appreciation for his “Hindutva” image as if the combination of two makes him irresistible.

While those respondents (Hindus) who are already considering to give BJP a chance in the 2014 Lok Sabha election were elated at the prospect of Narendra Modi being projected as the Prime Ministerial candidate, those who are still not clear about their political choice for the 2014 Lok Sabha election or who still don’t consider BJP as their first preference consistently opined that if Modi is elevated to the national platform, they will give a BJP a chance to rule the country.

Similarly, Muslim respondents were of the view that the projection of Modi will not go down well with Muslims and it may polarize Muslims against BJP wherein they will vote tactically constituency wise to ensure the defeat of the BJP candidates from that area.

The impact of Narendra Modi enigma among Hindus gets reflected from the fact that even among Yadavs and Dalits, who otherwise are committed voters of Samajvadi Party and B.S.P respectively, the overwhelming response was that Modi factor will help BJP tremendously in the coming Lok sabha election. Upon further query, these two set of respondents remarked that even if they vote for their respective parties, S.P and B.S.P, they will support Modi from inside their heart.

The main enthusiastic sections among Hindus who vouch for Modi and will prefer BJP in the ensuing 2014 Lok sabha elections will be the upper, non-Yadav OBCs, and some non-Jatav Dalit castes like Khatiks and Pasis.

Some of the popular responses for or against Modi are: “Modi is the best P.M as he is a “forthright ruler (kada Shasak) who ensures "Rule of Law" (Kuchh Gadbad nahi hone deta; response of a Jatav in Hapur); “Narendra Modi: It won’t go down well for Muslims of UP” (response of a Muslim Pradhan in Amroha); “BJP has a chance to emerge stronger if Narendra Modi is projected as P.M candidate and comes to U.P for campaigning.” (A khatri at Muradabad); “If Narendra Modi comes there would be trouble.” (A Muslim at Bareilly); “Modi is a tormentor: Modi zulm karta hai)” (a Muslim at Pilibhit); “If Narendra Modi comes BJP will be immensely benefitted as the Parliament elections will be held on Hindu-Muslim base” (A kayastha at Pilibhit); “If Narendra Modi come then its splendid. All will unite. (Narendra Modi aa jaye to kya baat ho, sab ek ho jayenge)” (A Yadav at Eta); “If the combo of Narendra Modi and Kalyan singh come, then BJP may get upto 40 out of 80 seats in UP in 2014 election. (A Lodh at Eta), “Narendra Modi factor will give BJP a tremendous edge over others” (A Maurya at Allahabad), “ Narendra Modi factor will

work only in urban areas not in rural areas” (A Brahmin at a village in Varanasi), “We all are with BJP if Modi comes” (A Brahmin at Banda); “ This time its advantage BJP if Modi campaigns” (A Rajput youth at Kanpur Dehat), “Narendra Modi is good but we will vote for the elephant” (Some dalits at Jhansi); “BJP’s graph in U.P will rise if Modi comes” (A Brahmin at Agra), “ BJP will get many more seats that otherwise it can’t win” (A Rajput at Mathura).

In the final analysis, though it would be premature to guess the number of seats that BJP may get, it can be safely said that if Narendra Modi is projected as PM and leads the campaign in U.P, the saffron party’s tally will see a big rise.

CONGRESS AND RAHUL GANDHI: Of all the parties in the state, Congress seems to be lagging behind across the social constituencies for various reasons. No section among any community identified themselves with Congress except in Raebareilly and Amethi due to specific reasons that will be outlined later.

Further, the Rahul Gandhi factor doesn’t seem to inspire the voters. His image is of someone who is surrounded by a coterie and acts upon their advice rather than his own. Moreover, Congress, as a party, has no strong state leader. Overall, Congress prospects in the 2014 Lok Sabha election look bleak and gloomy.

Also, Congress has earned a bad name due to unpopular measures like overall inflation leading to rise in prices of almost essential commodities, petrol, diesel and fertilizers, apart from cap on the number of LPG cylinders that a family can have annually. Besides, the recent rape case in Delhi has dented the image of Congress as a party that doesn’t care for the people.

And, most importantly, the **DIRECT CASH TRANSFER SCHEME**. It remains a “NO-NEWS” among majority of the intended beneficiaries and even those who are aware about it through media reports reject it as mere eyewash and a stunt before the elections. In fact, a poor respondent who was aware about the proposed scheme remarked that “this direct cash transfer scheme is merely a political fraud to mislead the people. (Sab tappebaji hai)!!

Similarly, one of the respondents in Bareilly remarked that Congress seems to be a distant party to the common voters. The party leaders are compared to English-speaking crowd, disconnected from the ground, while the common people look for a party and candidate who is approachable and readily available to them.

Thus in the final analysis, it seems that the tally of Congress will certainly go down as many Congress MPs from the state are highly unpopular in their respective constituencies and voters are waiting to reject them. Only some unexpected magic can help Congress retain its present tally: a possibility that seems utterly difficult at present.

INCUMBENCY AND SP: If the current state of political situation in the Uttar Pradesh is any indicator, the Samajvadi Party will certainly lose the support of many sections that voted for it during the last Assembly election.

In fact, there were similarities in the responses of the people who felt that the S.P government is a failure on two fronts: Law and Order has collapsed leading to the rise in “Gundagardi” and two, it has betrayed the voters by making false promises just to garner their votes.

But, at the same, it was observed that the anger of a voter towards a particular party or candidate may not necessarily translate into the voter not voting for the same. For instance, the two traditional support bases of Samajvadi Party --- Yadavs and Muslims -- expressed the same views regarding the state of law and Order and

false electoral promises, but were ambiguous in their position when it came to punishing the SP in the 2014 Lok Sabha election by not voting for the same. This aspect becomes important in the background that both Muslims and Yadavs together constitute more than 25% of the total population in the state.

Moreover, the prospect of SP will also be contingent upon Modi and other factors wherein the political orientation of the upper castes and non-Yadav OBCs depends. Further, the responses regarding the prospect of SP in the 2014 Lok Sabha election were mixed in the sense wherein in some constituencies, SP was given the first place among all the parties while in others the view that it will be defeated this time round.

In the final analysis, it can be said that Samajvadi Party's tally may not witness a major swing upwards or downwards. Changes in the final tally may be marginal.

MAYAWATI AND BSP: In the study, arriving at the prospects of BSP in the ensuing Lok Sabha election turned out to be more complex given the vague response of non-Dalit Hindu respondents who are fed up with the SP government but not clear if they will consider trying BSP next year.

But given the marginalization of Dalits after BSP/Mayawati lost power a year ago, there are strong chances that this time there would be a stronger consolidation of Dalits behind Mayawati/BSP.

The factor that will go against the electoral prospect of Mayawati/BSP is conditionally related to the B.J.P's internal decision regarding Narendra Modi. That is to say, the Dalits will more strongly consolidate behind BSP but the non-dalit voters who are angry with S.P are also not very happy with Mayawati as the reasons that factored her defeat are still in the psyche of these voters. So ultimately if they choose BJP as their choice, then BSP doesn't have a strong chance to notch up more numbers than it currently has in the Lok Sabha.

Overall, the electoral prospect of BSP in the 2014 Lok Sabha election will be largely dependent on what BJP does with Modi.

MUSLIM PARTIES: Of late, there seems to be a new trend among Muslims, though at margins at present but with huge inherent potential, to have a separate party of their own. In this regard, two such parties that merits due attention as they had their share of impact on the political prospects of other parties. **First**, the “**PEACE PARTY**” led by Dr. Ayub that saw its electoral rise in the previous Uttar Pradesh election wherein it won four seats.

Secondly, another Muslim party that merits attention is the “**National Ulema Council**” formed at AZAMGARH against the “BATLA ENCOUNTER ISSUE” that secured a substantial number of votes in the Azamgarh’s five Assembly constituency playing a decisive role in the victory or defeat of candidates of various parties.

Upon interaction with the important leaders of both these parties, it was pointed out that there may be an alliance between the two in the coming Lok Sabha election. Both these parties are of the view that Muslims can get their rightful due only by having a party of their own rather than playing a second fiddle to other parties that just treat them as mere vote banks.

In the final analysis, their true impact in affecting the electoral prospects of other parties may not be huge but will be felt especially in segments where there are close contests. It would be too early to assess the extent of impact that they would be having upon the electoral prospects of other parties in the state. They may not have come yet but certainly they are on the rise!!

DIVISION OF UP: INTRA-REGIONAL DIMENSIONS:

The question of division of Uttar Pradesh into smaller states has been in the news for a long time. In fact, just before the last Assembly election, Mayawati announced her intention of dividing the State into four states namely, “Western U.P”, “Central U.P”, “Eastern U.P” and “Bundelkhand”. In this background, an attempt was made to assess the opinion of the people in this regard and have a comparative analysis of the responses of one region with that of the other.

Western UP: Majority of the respondents were not enthusiastic about the idea of dividing the state. Some of the respondents who were supportive of the idea were clear that there is no emotional angle to the demand. They seemed to be equally comfortable with or without division. Those who supported the idea were expecting some development accruing to their area citing Uttarakhand’s example. But, there is no movement for a separate state among the people of the region.

At the same time, many people, mainly businessmen, opposed the idea of division of UP for the reason that they would have to pay more tax and it won’t help the region otherwise too as all the politicians are inherently one and the same.

Central UP: Except for a lone respondent at Pilibhit who talked of the desirability of a separate state of Rohailkhand containing Pilibhit, Bareilly, Badaun, Shahjahanpur & Anwla, all the respondents were averse to a division. Their argument: united state is a matter of pride for them and further there’s no public sentiment for the same. In fact one of the responses at Farrukhabad summed up the anti-division sentiment of the region in these words, “UP should not be divided as power lies in unity and further division is not good for country (sangathan me shakti hai aur batwara desh ke liye badhiyan nahi hai).”

Eastern UP: Unequivocally, from Allahabad to Varanasi, Jaunpur to Azamgarh and at many other eastern districts, people across the social constituencies strongly opposed the very idea of the division of U.P citing that ***the demand for a separate “POORVANCHAL” state is the demand of the politicians rather than the people of the region.*** Further, the respondents argued that how a big state is good for the people as its gives them a sense of empowerment at national level and that division will create more social and economic barriers for the already impoverished region.

Bundelkhand: However, in the two districts that were covered in Bundelkhand area viz., BANDA and JHANSI, there is a strong sentiment for a separate state of Bundelkhand. The people in general felt that a separate state is the need of the hour given the miserable condition they are living in under the shadow of acute poverty and lack of employment opportunities. The collective sentiment was that the creation of a separate state of Bundelkhand will make the region develop faster. Further, upon insistent querying whether the issue of a “separate Bundelkhand state” will politically unite the otherwise caste-wise socially-divided people, the response was not encouraging. But at the end, it can be inferred that the region of Bundelkhand has the strongest sentiment for a separate state. At the same time, it should be noted that there’s no movement for the same like in Telangana or Vidarbha.

Going by the responses, it can be inferred that except in BUNDELKHAND, in all other areas of the state, a majority of the people are not in favour of division of UP into smaller states. The demand for division seems more like a demand of the politicians who see a political space for themselves.

VIP CONSTITUENCIES: WHAT'S IN STORE

PILIBHIT:

This Lok Sabha constituency remains in news due to its association with senior BJP leader Maneka Gandhi who has been representing the seat for a long time and her son Varun Gandhi who won from the seat in 2009 general election.

On performance index, the general opinion is that neither Maneka Gandhi nor Varun Gandhi have done any significant developmental work for the area.

The Hindu-Muslim factor during Lok Sabha elections was attributed as the reason for their victory from the seats. It was also pointed out that in case Anis Ahmed, the dominant Muslim leader, doesn't contest from the seat on BSP's ticket, there are strong chances that this time B.M Singh will win from Congress ticket.

Nevertheless, it was reported that though it would be difficult for Maneka or Varuna Gandhi to sail this time but given the old political ambiance of Hindu-Muslim factor, the old political equation may ultimately favor them. There is also clamour that Maneka Gandhi may return again to Pilibhit in 2014 Lok Sabha election while Varun Gandhi may contest from Sultanpur.

Thus people in general are not happy with the performances of Varun and Maneka Gandhi.

FARRUKHABAD

Farrukhabad Lok sabha constituency is associated with the Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid.

People across the social spectrum (including Muslims) complained about the non-performance of their MP in the last 4 years. A cursory glance at the main entrance

of the city speaks volumes about the pathetic infrastructural condition of the area. Therefore, it seems that the going will be tough for him this time round.

In fact, a majority of the respondents were categorical in saying that he will be defeated in the next election, the major complaints being his recalcitrant attitude and non-approachability to the people.

Surprisingly, almost all the respondents said that personally he is good but would lose the election as he has not done any work in the last four years. In fact many respondents narrated the couplet of a famous song he used in the last campaign: “MERE PAIRO ME GHUNGHRU BANDH TO FIR MERI CHAAL DEKH LE” symbolizing that if he gets elected he would prove his developmental abilities. People said that “hamne unke pairo me ghunghru to bandh diye par unhone apni chaal nahi dikhayi” (As demanded, we elected him but he didn’t work for the area)!!

MAINPURI

This Lok Sabha constituency elects none other than Mulayam Singh Yadav. The reason as to why the area is considered, as the Mulayam’s bastion is due to the three factors --- the overwhelming majority of his own caste men, Yadavs, his personal social behavior and the support of Thakurs (Rajputs) and other castes.

But here too, a majority of the respondents complained as in Eta and Etawa (Eta, Mainpuri and Etawa are considered to be Mulayam’s belt) that nothing much has been done for the betterment of the area in any field. People complained of bad shape of agriculture due to burden of agricultural loans and its shrinking potential leading to the migration of people from these areas to neighboring places like Delhi, Punjab and Haryana in search of job.

Older people reminiscently remembered that Ram Naresh Yadav, who was the first Yadav CM of Uttar Pradesh in 1977 government has done much better work for the

common people in general and Yadavs in particular as compared to Mulayam Singh Yadav.

Similarly, it was claimed by many Yadav respondents themselves that though they vote as per the instruction of “Neta Ji” (as Mulayam Singh Yadav is called in U.P) it’s a fact that whatever development “Mainpuri” has witnessed is because of the hard work put in by Congress leader “Balram Singh Yadav”.

But ultimately, they all will vote for Mulayam Singh Yadav given their caste association and social behavior.

KANPUR

The story of Kanpur Lok Sabha constituency, represented by senior Congress leader ShriPrakash Jaiswal, is no different from Salman Khurshid. It is more than likely that he will lose the next general election given his non-performance and non-approachability. The man on the ascendancy is popular BJP leader Sanjay Mahana who, in all probability, would be the BJP’s candidate.

Kanpur Lok sabha constituency is mainly dominated by Banias and Brahmins. In the city area, Kayasthas are also in significant number. Sanjay Mahana (a Sindhi), who hails from business community in addition to being very approachable, makes him a popular figure for the next general election. Hence, its advantage BJP at Kanpur.

RAI BAREILY

This Lok Sabha constituency needs no introduction due to its long term attachment to the Gandhi Family. On performance index, a majority of the respondents expressed their frustration for the neglect of the area but surprisingly they seemed to be exonerating their MP Sonia Gandhi by arguing that though no work has been

done in the last 15 years but their MP keeps sending money for the development of the area that gets gobbled by the political caretakers like Kishori Lal Sharma and others who are the appointed men of Gandhi family in the area.

Further, it was also alleged that Raibareilly and Amethi have suffered due to the inter-party politics between state and the center in the sense that their MP hails from Congress while since last two decades the state has witnessed a non-Congress government. Therefore, the people of the area were of the opinion that they are punished by the non-Congress state government for electing Sonia Gandhi as their MP.

A frequent complaint was the lack of any industry or any alternative to agriculture that is already in a precarious situation. In fact, near IT Area, many respondents pointed to the old and closed textile and other factories that were started by Indira Gandhi. These factories were lying closed for the last 20 years and it was alleged that Sonia Gandhi has promised to revive them but nothing has been done. Further, the condition of roads was pathetic and the same was true about the supply of electricity. People made a comparative sense of analysis pointing out how 200 kms from Rai Bareilly, the condition of roads in Pratapgarh is good due to the work of Pramod Tiwari.

At the same time, a significant percentage of respondents acknowledged that Sonia Gandhi thinks about the area and an instance in sight was the proposed rail Coach factory at Lalgunj in the district that will generate employment in the area.

Asked as to why they keep on electing someone from Gandhi family from their constituencies the respondents cited three main reasons:

- A. Long emotional association with the Gandhi family since Indira Gandhi era.
- B. The feeling that they are electing a super-P.M.

C. The Gandhi family cares for the area and the people but it's the intermediaries like K.L Sharma mismanages everything.

Finally, almost all the respondents were clear that come what may, Sonia Gandhi will keep winning from their constituency.

AMETHI

Like Rai-Bareilly, Amethi's association with Gandhi family is too well known. But on performance parameter, people are not happy even here. They recall that significant development took place when Rajiv Gandhi represented them but point out that Rahul Gandhi has been somewhat cut off from the ground realities. Like in Rai Bareilly, people are accusing political intermediaries like Kamlesh Mattu and K.L Sharma of isolating Rahul Gandhi from the people.

Though people acknowledged that Rahul Gandhi keeps frequenting the area, he is not associating with people the way his father Rajiv Gandhi used to do. Further, some of the respondents also complained that Rahul Gandhi comes to the area and stays at Munshigunj guest house, mingles with the political agents, takes a tour of the area as suggested by them and thinks that he is in touch with the people. They expect him to get out of the clutch of these intermediaries and mingle with the people the way his father used to do.

Nevertheless, these complaints apart, most of the respondents opined that they will vote for Rahul Gandhi as he is a simple and innocent person who is misled by the local Congress leaders. Like Raibareilly, people seem to exonerate Rahul Gandhi for all his failures by citing the same reasons that have been outlined there.

The factors, as to why they will keep electing Rahul Gandhi, are:

A. Long emotional association with the Gandhi family since Indira Gandhi era.

- B. The feeling that they are electing a super-P.M.
- C. The Gandhi family cares for the area and the people but it's the intermediaries like K.L Sharma who mismanages everything.

VARANASI (BENARAS)

Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency is represented by senior BJP leader Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, who after being defeated from his old Lok Sabha constituency Allahabad in 2004 general election, shifted to Varanasi in 2009 general election.

On performance indicator, he emerges one of the most unpopular leaders. His non-performance is as bad as that of ShriPrakash Jaisawal in Kanpur. It was widely alleged that Joshi was not even able to fully utilize his M.P Development Fund.

His victory in 2009 Lok Sabha election was attributed to the following factors:

- A. The predominance of Banias in city area who are traditional supporters of BJP.
- B. The rumour on the day of voting that Mukhtar Ansari (an alleged criminal turned politician) is going to win polarized a majority of Hindus cutting across caste lines in favour of Joshi. Otherwise, it was opined by several respondents that Ajay Rai could have won.

Further, Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency contains 5 Assembly seats. In total, there is a fine balance in the urban and rural areas. Demographically, Banias are in majority in the city area while Patels (Kurmis) have an edge in the rural areas followed by other castes.

On the prospects of Joshi in 2014 Lok Sabha election, a majority of respondents alleged that this time he will be defeated even if Narendra Modi campaigns for him

at Varanasi. It is expected that in 2014, the main contest would be between Surendra Patel of Samajvadi Party and Ajai Rai (expected to contest from Congress).

The popular perception in Varanasi gets summed up in the remark of a respondent at KAJISARAI AZGARA at rural Varanasi: “Joshi may be a national leader but he can never be a leader of the people.”

CONCLUSION

Peoples Pulse study was modest in its attempt to gauge the mood of the voters in the State of Uttar Pradesh. Within the short span of 15 days it would be an overstatement to claim to capture the nuances and complexities of the political process and governance in the State as big as UP. Nevertheless, the study can claim to have a glimpse and a first-hand experience of the state of politics and governance in the state as perceived by the people themselves. Based on these engaging interactions with the people some broad inferences can be drawn as follows:

As things stands today, assuming that Narendra Modi will finally emerge the PM candidate on behalf of the BJP, it is more than likely that the saffron party will vastly improve its position in 2014 compared to 2009. The combination of Rajnath Singh and Modi is expected to consolidate the party’s position ahead of the general election and the perceived impression that the SP government is only favouring Muslims, Yadavs might also help the BJP to consolidate the Hindutwa factor and other OBC sections.

Samajvadi Party won the last Assembly election as an alternative to BSP due to its image of being anti-Mayawathi more prominently as compared to BJP and Congress in addition to its substantive electoral promises that appealed to each and every section of society. In the last one year after SP assumed power, there has been a state of statelessness given the collapse of Law & Order machinery and rising

“Gundagardi”. Further, the state has failed to keep its electoral promises. Hence a sense of disenchantment prevails against the Samajvadi Party.

BSP lost power one year ago, since then marginalization of Dalits in SP rule. Keeping this factor, there are strong chances that this time there would be a stronger consolidation of Dalits behind Mayawathi/BSP.

Who’s going to be loser then? In all likelihood, it will be the Congress. Though Modi and Rahul Gandhi are seen more or less on an equal footing when it comes to PM candidate, lack of organizational structure that can convert support into votes may prove a handicap to the Congress. Unless a sustained and conscious effort is made by the Congress from now on, the party might end up in single digit when it comes to MP seats with the party’s loss accruing to the BJP. Barring a few seats either way, it is likely that the SP and BSP would retain the 2009 position.

The only way Congress can manage to prevent a severe damage is to turn the twenty percent Muslim votes its way, particularly if Modi becomes the BJP symbol. Even in the last election, the good performance of Congress was on account of Muslims backing the party expecting it to win at the national level. But, if such a confidence is not created among them in 2014, it is possible that they may plump for SP considering that it is in power at least in the State. Muslims are generally known to swing towards the party that is most likely to assume power.

The final outcome will, however, largely depend on how almost all parties beat the incumbency factor. Cutting across party lines, there is severe discontent among voters against the sitting MPs, whether they are representing the Congress or BJP. Therefore, selection of right candidates along with proper consolidation of voters from the village level will hold the key.

This apart, the key question, apart from the two main contenders for prime ministership in 2014 – Rahul Gandhi and Narendra Modi – it is interesting that the other two who also harbour a similar hope – Mayawati and Mulayam Singh Yadav – also belong to UP. The main fight will, of course, be between Modi and Rahul when looked at from the national scale. The fact that UPA has been in power for two consecutive terms will be negative for the Congress given the usual anti-incumbency factor, apart from the “over-exposure” of Rahul Gandhi in the Assembly elections that were held last year. But, if what voters of Amethi or Rai Bareilly said is an indication, successive victories for the Gandhi family from these segments is on account of the fact that the people think they are electing those who rule the nation. Thus, Rahul Gandhi becomes the “son of the soil” while Modi is an outsider. Will it be the right pitch for the Congress?