

Why did Dalits desert the BSP? The 2012 Assembly Elections in Uttar Pradesh

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The results of the 2012 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections saw the incumbent Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) defeated by the Samajwadi Party (SP). The fact that the BSP lost the election was not much of a surprise. The BSP's poor showing in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections indicated that it would face an uphill task to get re-elected during the 2012 Assembly elections. But what came as a surprise was the manner in which the party got defeated. The vote share of the BSP may not have declined very much but its tally of seats was reduced by more than half.

In 2007 the BSP secured an overall majority, winning 206 seats and 30 per cent of the vote. During the 2012 Assembly elections the BSP lost 4.5 percentage points in votes and lost 126 Assembly seats. Though the decline of 4.5 percentage point votes may not look like a big loss; in a four cornered contest even a modest change in votes can have a big impact on seats. Moreover, of potentially great concern to the BSP, the party's popularity declined most amongst its core supporters.

The BSP fared particularly badly in places where it had traditionally done well, such as in the assembly constituencies reserved for Dalits. In the 2007 assembly elections, the BSP won 61 of the 89 seats reserved for Dalits, which corresponds to 68% of the reserved seats. This time, in 2012, the BSP won only 15 of the 85 seats reserved for Dalits, which corresponds to just 18%. (Following delimitation the number of seats reserved for Dalits declined from 89 to 85). Moreover, findings from the post poll survey conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) Delhi indicate that the BSP's vote share fell by an estimated 24 percentage points among its core support – the Dalits. During the assembly elections held five years back in 2007, 86 percent of Jatavs voted for the BSP; in the recently concluded assembly elections of 2012 only 62 percent of Jatavs did so. There was also a similar decline in the vote share of the BSP amongst other Dalit castes, who had traditionally voted for the BSP in big numbers. By contrast the BSP's vote share among Upper Castes and Muslims did not change by much, and in fact slightly increased.

In this article we examine why so many Dalits failed to vote for the BSP. Why did the party's most loyal supporters fail to back the party for re-election? The success of the BSP in Uttar Pradesh over the last 10 years or so has rested on a strategy of securing the votes from the vast majority of the State's 35 million Dalits, which make up 21% of the electorate, (Census

2001) and topping up this core vote bank with a scattering of votes from the backward sections of other communities. We suggest that although caste remains important; the loyalty of so-called 'vote banks' to parties cannot be taken for granted.

We start by examining which sections of the Dalit community were least likely to vote for the BSP, and then consider a range of possible explanations for why Dalits may have voted for other parties.

Although the BSP has been in power at the state before, on the previous occasions it had been in coalition with the BJP, and so Maywati had been unable to rule with a free-hand, and was dependent upon making compromises along the way in order to keep the support of coalition partners. However, when the BSP won an overall majority of the seats in 2007 there were high hopes among its supporters that the party would be able to implement the kind of policies that would bring about social change in the state. On the back of a remarkable victory, and amid much enthusiasm and optimism for the future, expectations among Dalits were undeniably high.

Meeting these expectations was never going to be easy. In this paper we examine Dalit attitudes towards three main aspects of BSP rule. The first is to do with the politics of identity and recognition. One of the major policies of the BSP's time in office was the construction of 'Dalit' statues and parks. These policies were designed to empower Dalits by commemorating their achievements through 'symbolic representation'. We examine Dalit attitudes towards these statues and parks – did Dalits support these policies? What did they think of the statues? And how did these attitudes and judgements translate into voting behaviour?

The second theme we examine is to do with the politics of patronage and clientelism. U.P is often described as a patronage democracy, where political parties reward their supporters by distributing the spoils of office. Did Dalits benefit from the special social programs that were initiated under the BSP to help the downtrodden? What impact did these programs have on voting behaviour?

And the third theme we examine is to do with the politics of performance and public policy. How did Dalits judge the general performance of the BSP, particularly in terms of

development and corruption? By examining the impact that these three factors had on Dalit support for the BSP we can begin to untangle the extent to which political support depends upon symbolic representation; material self-interest; and general good governance. But before we look at these issues it may be useful to look at what the different political parties promised the voters before the elections.

Campaign Promises made by Political Parties during 2012 Assembly Election in U.P

The key issues in the campaign were development, reservation, and patronage, with all of the parties making promises to give some form of financial or material goods to the poorer sections of society.

The BSP campaigned for re-election on a promise to pursue economic policies to benefit the general public rather than to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. The party released a 28 page booklet that highlighted major programmes and schemes started by the government – such as the Mahamaya Garib Arthik Madad Yojana, Savitri Bai Phule Balika Shiksha Madad Yojana, Mahamaya Garib balika Aashirwaad Yojana, Mahamaya Sarvjan Awaas Yojana, Kanshri Ram Awaas Yojana. In an attempt to reach out to the marginalized sections of society the BSP attacked the BJP and the Congress for trying to phase out the reservation system by encouraging the private sector. The BSP also proposed to introduce something on the lines of economic reservation, with reservations in government jobs and educational institutions based on one's economic background. The BSP also made a series of specific pledges, such as to provide free tablets for tenth standard students and scholarships for students from the OBC (other backward castes) category.

The SP also put forward campaign pledges to try and court the votes of the OBCs and the marginalized sections of the society. In order to appeal to the farmers, they criticized the Land Acquisition Policy of the BSP government. The issue of corruption was raised by the party in numerous rallies. In a bid to appeal to rural farmers the SP promised free water from dams and government owned wells, and low interest loans. The SP also campaigned against the Lok Sabha bill on FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in retail, which was a policy many thought would hurt farmers and small shop owners. In an attempt to appease the Muslims who constitute 18 percent of the population in the state, the SP also promised to increase the sub quota for Muslims from 4.5 percent as promised by Congress to 18

percent. The SP also made promises for opening Urdu medium schools and Madrasas across the state, and to give a sum of rupees 30000 to Muslim girls who pass 10th standard. The SP also promised to provide free tablets for students who pass 10th and free laptops for students who pass 12th.

The Congress party campaigned on the slogan 'NAV' (N- Nyaya, A- Adhikaar and V- Vikas) Uttar Pradesh 2020, and promised strong leadership, better governance, and to make towns and cities in U.P. centres for economic and industrial growth. The Congress also promised to make UP a leader in agriculture and to provide a good livelihood for farmers, and to create more than 20 Lakh jobs in the state and open more intermediate colleges. The party promised free electricity connections for all BPL, SC and ST families. More specifically, in a bid to appeal to Muslim voters some Congress leaders promised to increase the sub Quota for Muslims from 4.5%. However, they did not put forward many Muslim candidates.

The Bharitya Janta Party (BJP) revived its historic promise to build the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya. The BJP claimed that they would make the state of Uttar Pradesh the 'best state in the country'. The other major promises made by the BJP were better governance, to end corruption, to create unemployment benefits, better employment opportunities and better health facilities. On the economic front the BJP promised greater industrialization to reduce the number of people leaving the state to find jobs. This in many ways is similar to the Congress promise of better employment opportunities. For the unemployed the party promises to give an allowance of 24000 rupees. The party also stressed the issue of women's empowerment. The party also emphasized its support for the women's reservation bill which provides 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha, state assembly and other government jobs. Unlike the other parties the BJP promised to do away with the minority quota within the OBC quota. The party also promised one cow to all families below the poverty line, and to provide free cycles for girls and free computers and laptops for students.

All the parties promised to improve development in Uttar Pradesh if they came to power. The parties made promises which they thought would appeal to their core voters, but also made promises which they thought would appeal to broader cross-sections of society. Indeed, it is notable how similar many of their policies were to each other, and this similarity

perhaps helped to blur some of the social differences that have traditionally existed between the supporters of the main parties.

Caste voting in Uttar Pradesh

One of the defining features of electoral politics in Uttar Pradesh over the last 20 years has been the electoral salience of caste and the distinctive social base of party support. Each of the main parties in U.P. has tended to be very popular among certain sections of society and very unpopular among others. For example, the BJP has tended to do very well among upper castes and very badly among Muslims. The SP has tended to do very well among Yadavs and Muslims; and the BSP has tended to do very well among Dalits, and the Jatavs in particular. Only the Congress lacks a distinctive social base, but over the last 20 years or so the Congress has failed to make much of an impression on state level politics. Thus with the exception of the OBCs – who have tended to divide their support between the different parties – each of the main community groups in U.P. have been aligned to a particular political party.

Over recent years there is some evidence to suggest that this caste alignment has been weakening. Since the high water mark of the late 1990s there has been a gradual blurring of the social identity of the main parties. The upper castes have drifted away from the BJP, particularly in rural areas, and in the last few elections Muslims have been relatively fluid in their voting choices, switching their support between the SP, BSP, and sometimes even the Congress.

The Assembly Elections of 2012 have continued this trend; and the importance of caste as a predictor of vote choice is probably at its weakest for thirty years. That is not to say that caste does not matter. It still exerts a very powerful hold over voting behaviour. As we can see from Table 1 the SP did considerably better amongst the Yadavs than it did among other communities; the BSP did considerably better among Dalits than amongst other communities; and the BJP performed considerably better amongst the upper castes compared to any other communities. But this was an election where caste was not as important as it has been in previous elections. The impressive victory of the SP during the 2012 assembly elections is not because it did better among Yadavs, but because it managed to attract voters from various other caste communities. Indeed, the party's share of the vote

actually declined somewhat among Yadavs. Similarly the BJP did less well among upper castes (its vote share among upper castes declined from 45 percent in 2007 to 30 percent in 2012); and, as already noted, the BSP did less well among Dalits.

Table 1 Caste and vote, Uttar Pradesh

	SP	BSP	BJP	Congress-RLD	Other	N
Upper caste	27%	18%	30%	17%	9%	1736
Yadav	72%	9%	11%	4%	3%	657
OBC	42%	20%	17%	14%	7%	1157
Jatav	20%	65%	5%	6%	4%	817
SC	24%	48%	8%	15%	4%	582
Muslim	49%	19%	6%	20%	6%	1105
Other	33%	23%	14%	24%	7%	559

Note: Source: Post Poll Survey conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).

The decline of Dalit support for the BSP is particularly striking. It is striking both in terms of the magnitude of the swing – a 20 point drop since 2007 – but also in terms of what it says about the logic of caste politics in UP. Dalits have historically been regarded as a solid vote bank for the BSP, whose support the party can rely on through thick and thin. But the experience of 2012 suggest that there may be a limit to which communities traditionally viewed as ‘vote banks’ can be relied upon to offer parties unconditional support. Thus the answers to our questions about why so many Dalits didn’t vote for the BSP this time out may have wider significance for understanding the logic and limits of caste politics in U.P.

The Social base of Dalit support for the BSP

We start our analysis by simply examining the social background of Dalits who voted for the BSP. Which groups were the most likely to support the BSP and which the least?

Socialisation theories of partisan support suggest that loyalty towards a political party strengthens over time through the constant repetition of voting and participating in the electoral process. Older people, who have voted for the same party many times, are therefore thought to be less likely to change their voting behaviour than young people, who have not yet built up the same level of psychological attachment to a political party. We may therefore expect young Dalits to be more likely to vote for other parties than older

Dalits since the young will not have been socialised in the same way to being loyal to the party.

We may also anticipate some differences in BSP support by socioeconomic status. The well-educated and well-off may have higher expectations about what government should deliver, and so be harder to satisfy. Educated and well off people may be harder to mobilise by symbols and patronage (not least because it is very expensive to buy the votes of wealthy people). We may therefore expect well educated and wealthy Dalits to be less likely to vote for the BSP since their support is harder to obtain through traditional means of patronage and symbolism.

From Figure 1 we can see that many of these expectations are realised and the Dalits who were least likely to vote for the BSP form a relatively distinctive group of the young, the well educated, the relatively well-off, and the urban.

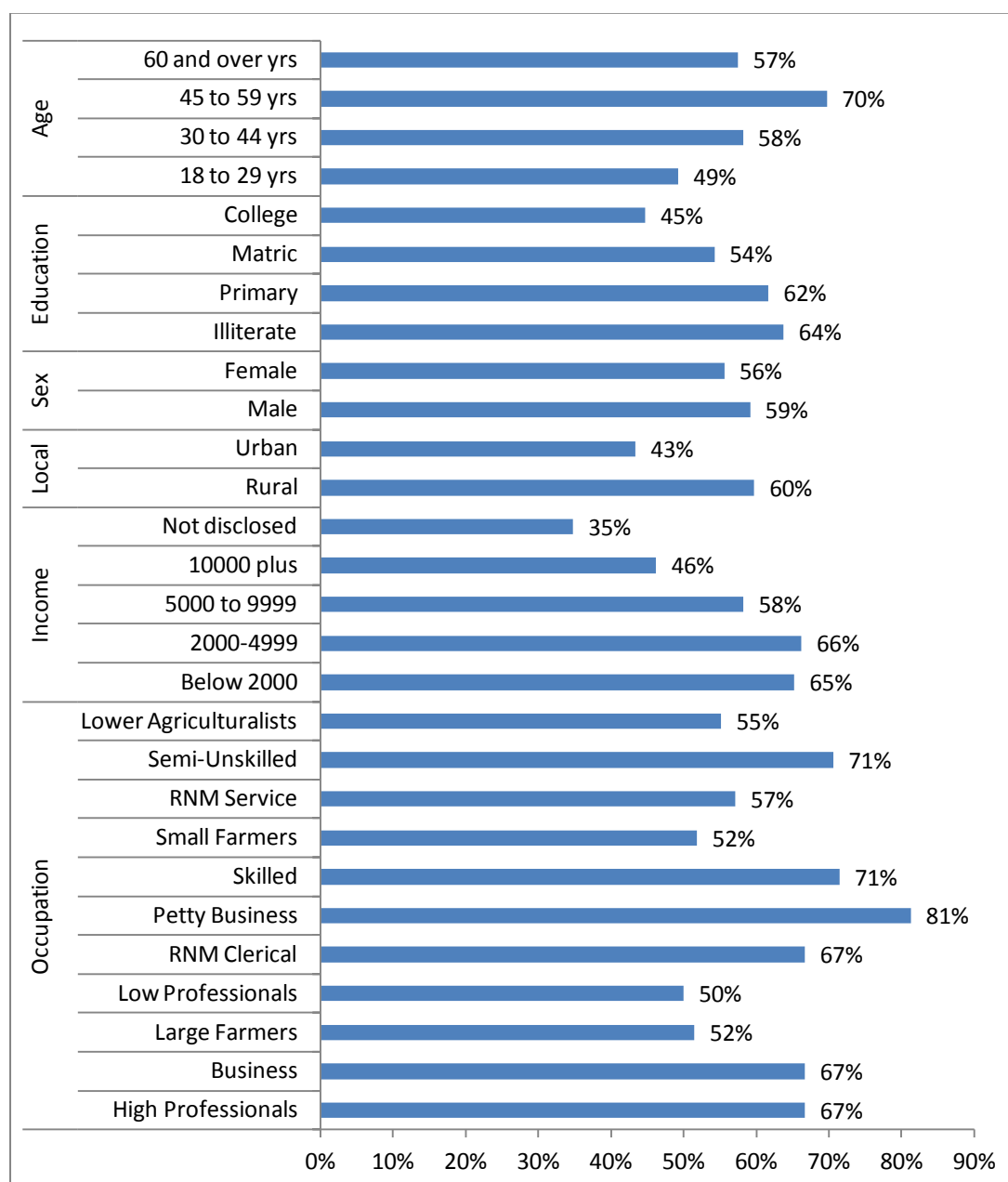
There are significant differences in support for the BSP by age group. Whereas 70 percent of Dalits aged between 45 and 59 reported having voted for the BSP; only 49 percent of Dalits under the age of 30 reported having done so. Young Dalits split their votes almost evenly between the SP (24%) and the Congress-RLD (18%).

Similarly, Dalit support for the BSP is sharply divided along socio-economic lines. Less educated Dalits were much more likely to vote for the BSP than well-educated Dalits, with 64% of illiterate Dalits reporting that they voted for the BSP; compared to just 45% of Dalits with at least some college education. Poor Dalits were also much more likely to vote for the BSP than richer Dalits, with 65% of Dalits on a household income of less than 5000 Rupees per month reporting that they voted for the BSP, compared to just 46% of Dalits on an income of 10,000 Rupees per month.

Dalits living in urban areas were much less likely to vote for the BSP than Dalits living in Rural areas, and there are also some differences in support for the BSP by occupation. Dalits involved in small and petty business (81%) were the most likely occupational group to vote for the BSP, followed by Skilled (71%) and Unskilled workers (71%); whereas farmers (52%) and low grade professionals (50%) were the least likely occupational group to vote for the BSP. There was not much difference in support for the BSP by gender. Whereas 59% of Dalit

men voted for the BSP; 56% of Dalit women did so. Dalit women do not appear to be more likely to support the BSP because the party is headed by a woman. There is thus little evidence of any 'gender voting.'

Figure 1 Social background of Dalits who voted for the BSP, percentages



Source: Post Poll Survey conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).

In the following sections we examine attitudes towards a number of political issues which may have divided Dalit opinion on the BSP, and then examine how these attitudes relate to

these social differences. Why did so many young, well-educated, wealthy Dalits fail to vote for the BSP?

The Politics of Symbols?

An important aspect of caste politics is often thought to relate to “struggles for recognition” and the symbolic empowerment of previously marginalised communities. This has been particularly relevant for the BSP, which has sought to overcome Dalits’ low ritual status by asserting itself in the political arena.

In this section we examine how important factors related to the politics of symbols and recognition are for explaining Dalit support for the BSP. Ever since the days of Kanshi Ram, the BSP has been interested in the symbolic as well as material status of Dalits. Indeed one of the flagship policies of the BSP government has been symbolic. The Maywati government constructed many statues and parks throughout U.P. to commemorate the achievements of Dalits. But this policy has also been highly controversial, and attracted a lot of criticism in the media. The Noida Park project is estimated to have cost 685 crores, which many media commentators have argued could have been better spent on pressing social problems, such as roads, electricity, and schools.

But regardless of what media commentators thought, what did ordinary Dalits think? It was after all a policy that was designed to commemorate Dalits, and so one might think it would especially appeal to Dalits. But did it? Did the politics of symbols resonate with the Dalit electorate, or did Dalits think the money could have been better spent on more practical issues. How did these judgements relate to voting behaviour?

In the CSDS survey we asked a number of questions about what people thought of the statues (see Tables 2 and 3). Unsurprisingly the construction of statues was not particularly popular among the general public in Uttar Pradesh, and people were much more likely to agree with the statement that the statues were a waste of money than to disagree with the statement (34 percent vs. 14 percent). People in general were also more likely to think that Maywati was wrong to build the statues than think that she did the right thing by building statues and parks. (23 percent vs 15 percent)

Table 2 Statues a waste of money by caste, All

	Statues a waste of money					
	Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Fully disagree	No opinion	N
Upper caste	38%	17%	12%	16%	17%	1894
Yadav	42%	12%	9%	12%	26%	730
OBC	32%	16%	12%	12%	28%	1293
Jatav	28%	22%	11%	12%	26%	897
SC	29%	14%	13%	17%	27%	634
Muslim	33%	13%	11%	13%	30%	1201
Other	30%	24%	17%	7%	21%	643
All	34%	16%	11%	14%	25%	7292

Source: Post Poll Survey conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).

Notes: I will read out certain statements to you. Do you agree or disagree with the statement-Instead of development policies for common people BSP has wasted state money on building parks and statues?

All figures are in percent

However, more surprising is the finding that the construction of statues was not very popular even amongst the Dalits. From Table 2 we can see that even Dalits were more likely to agree with the statement that the statues were a waste of money than to disagree with the statement. And from Table 3 we can see that on balance Jatavs were only slightly more likely to agree with the statement that there was nothing wrong with Mayawati building statues than to disagree with the statement (41% vs 32%); whereas among other Dalit communities there were in fact slightly less people who agree with the statement than disagreed (33% vs 39%). There is thus only very limited support for the statues among the Dalit community. In this respect the opinions of the Dalits about the statues do not appear to differ very much from the opinions of other communities, and if Mayawati thought that the statues would be very popular among her core supporters, she therefore appears to have miscalculated.

Table 3 Support for statues by caste, row percentages

	Statues a good idea					
	Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Fully disagree	No opinion	N
Upper caste	15%	16%	19%	30%	20%	1890
Yadav	18%	16%	17%	24%	25%	730
OBC	128%	18%	19%	23%	29%	1294
Jatav	18%	23%	17%	15%	27%	898
SC	20%	13%	23%	16%	28%	634
Muslim	14%	17%	19%	21%	29%	1202
Other	13%	24%	27%	16%	21%	642
All	15%	17%	19%	23%	26%	7290

Source: Post Poll Survey conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).

Notes: I will read out certain statements to you. Do you agree or disagree with the statement-There is nothing wrong in Mayawati's decision of Establishing/building her own statues?

All figures are in percent

The construction of statues doesn't appear to have been very popular with Dalits, and moreover, it may even have cost the BSP votes. From Table 4 we can see that Dalits who fully supported the construction of statues were much more likely to vote for the BSP than Dalits who were more circumspect in their judgements. Whereas 73 percent of Dalits who fully supported the statues voted for the BSP; only 57 percent of Dalits who somewhat supported the statutes did so, and this fell further to less than 50 percent among those who did not support the statues. But the key distinction appears to be between those Dalits who were fully in favour of the statues and everyone else. From this data we cannot tell whether the construction of the statues had a mobilizing or demobilizing effect on Dalits. Perhaps if the statues had not been built the BSP would have fared even worse. But this interpretation seems unlikely. Most Dalits were not greatly enamoured with the construction of statues, and a sizeable proportion were actually against the policy. Moreover, those Dalits who were not keen on the statues were much less likely to vote for the BSP. What was therefore

intended as celebration of Dalits may have backfired somewhat in that it failed to capture their imagination.

Table 4 Support for statues and Vote among Dalits, row percentages

	SP	BSP	BJP	Congress- RLD	N
Fully agree	11	73	5	10	259
Somewhat agree	26	57	9	6	250
Somewhat disagree	26	41	10	19	254
Fully disagree	22	50	5	10	215
No Opinion	24	63	3	5	362

Source: Post Poll Survey conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).

Notes: I will read out certain statements to you. Do you agree or disagree with the statement-There is nothing wrong in Mayawati's decision of Establishing/building her own statues?
All figures are in percent

The Politics of Patronage?

If Dalits were unimpressed with Mayawati's politics of symbols, perhaps it is because they were hoping for more tangible benefits from having 'their' party in power. Uttar Pradesh has frequently been described as a 'patronage democracy' where parties redistribute the spoils of office to their supporters in return for their vote, and perhaps Dalits felt that Mayawati had not kept to her side of the bargain, and so, following the logic of clientelist exchanges, they withdrew their support from the BSP. Indeed, Mayawati's own wealth has been much publicised, and she has now amassed a personal fortune, with reported assets totalling Rs. 87.27 crore, according to an affidavit submitted to the Election Commission of India (ECI). Maybe some Dalits thought that she had kept the spoils of office for herself rather than sharing them with her caste.

Patronage and clientelism are notoriously difficult phenomenon to analyse, since by definition they are clandestine activities. Survey data is therefore likely to under-estimate

the scale of the problem, since people will generally not admit openly to having received financial gifts from political parties. But patronage can take a variety of forms. One type of policy that is often seen as a way of dispensing patronage are social programmes which give financial goods (or other goods) directly to targeted recipients. These policies may be directed towards specific sections of society to reward groups for their support or to entice new voters to support the party in the future.

Maywati launched a number of such schemes. On her birthday she announced one scheme that provided direct financial gifts to the poor, called “Uttar Pradesh Mukhya Mantri Mahamaya Garib Arthik Sahayata Yojana”. According to this scheme poor families would get Rs 300 per month, and it was thought that the main beneficiaries would be Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and families headed by women.

Table 5: Who benefited from financial aid schemes? Row percentages

	Benefited	Did not benefit	Did not hear about the scheme	N
Upper caste	6	35	52	1827
Yadav	15	31	50	888
OBC	5	34	56	1526
Jatav	15	25	53	888
SC	13	39	41	645
Muslim	5	28	62	1218

Source: Post Poll Survey conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).

All figures are in percent

Although it was widely anticipated that Dalits would be the primary beneficiaries of these schemes, we can see that many Upper Castes and Yadavs also said that they benefited from this scheme (see Table 5). Overall just under half the population had heard about the scheme, and just over 8 per cent had actually benefitted from it. However, there were some variations by caste. Muslims were less likely than other groups to know about the scheme, and also less likely to benefit from the scheme, with just under 5 percent reporting that they

had received the financial packages. Yadavs (15%) and Jatavs (15%) were the most likely groups to benefit from the scheme; with other Scheduled Castes (13%) also more likely than average to benefit. However, given that one of the stated aims of the scheme was to prioritise Scheduled Castes, it is surprising that more Dalits did not benefit from the scheme. And given that the scheme was intended for poor families it is perhaps also a bit of a surprise that more Muslims did not benefit while so many Yadavs did. Perhaps then some communities were able to access state resources better compared to others.

According to the logic of clientelism we would expect those groups who benefited from the financial handouts to be more likely to vote for the BSP than those who did not. From Table 6 we can see that Dalits who personally benefitted from this scheme were much more likely to vote for the BSP than Dalits who did not (72% vs. 49%). Interestingly though, Dalits who were aware about the scheme but did not benefit from it (49%) were much less likely to vote for the BSP than Dalits who were not aware about the scheme in the first place (59%). This raises the possibility that there was a backlash against the BSP among those Dalits who were aware about the scheme but did not receive the benefit.

Table 6 Patronage and Voting among Dalits, row percentages

	SP	BSP	BJP	Congress-RLD	N
Recipient of aid	11	72	7	8	195
Not a recipient	22	49	7	16	435
Not aware of scheme	26	57	3	13	633

Source: Post Poll Survey conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).

All figures are in percent

The impact that this scheme had on the voting behaviour of other castes was not so pronounced, with only 22% of those who benefitted from the financial assistance voting for the BSP compared to 17% among those who did not receive the financial assistance. As an inducement to support the government then, these financial payments seem to have had far greater effect on the BSP's core voters than they did on attracting new voters. This is in

line with studies on clientelism in general which tend to find that it works better on rewarding loyal voters than it does on attracting new voters, who tend to take the inducement but feel no loyalty to reward the party with their vote.

The first law of patronage then is to make sure that you adequately reward your core supporters, and on one level it appears that the BSP failed to do this. In a sense then the scheme may have backfired. Most Dalits didn't benefit from the financial assistance, which perhaps they thought was their due, and this may have encouraged them to turn their vote elsewhere. Thus rather than the financial inducements encouraging Dalits to vote for the BSP, it may have had the reverse effect and encouraged those who did not benefit to vote against the BSP.

Government performance

The issues we have considered so far relate to narrow caste interests, in symbolic and material terms. Now we turn our attention to consider broader issues relating to government performance and public policy. Uttar Pradesh has often been described as 'goonda raj', a patronage democracy and a developmental failure. There are, however, a number of reasons for thinking that issues relating to governmental performance warrant closer attention. Given the decline in caste voting, it may be that voters are becoming more concerned with public goods to do with development and corruption than traditional primordial loyalties. The recent trend towards a bifurcation of the party system between the SP and the BSP certainly encourages greater clarity of responsibility, and potentially creates the conditions for judging governments on their performance record. Thus it may be that whatever the BSP delivered (or failed to deliver) in terms of symbolic representation and patronage to Dalits, the party was judged by Dalits and others in terms of its ability to deliver on the key issues facing the state.

In general terms Dalits appeared to be satisfied with the performance of the BSP government. The vast majority said they were satisfied, though it is perhaps telling that a sizeable proportion were simply 'satisfied' rather than 'very satisfied'. For example 43 percent of Jatavs were very satisfied with the BSP government and 30 percent were satisfied. Similarly 31 percent amongst other Dalit groups were very satisfied and 30 percent

were satisfied. Thus although there was general support for the performance of the BSP government, the support was somewhat equivocal.

However, if we scratch below the surface we see that there were a number of bones of contention that might provide insight into why Dalits did not vote for the BSP in the same numbers as previously. One of the most salient issues in Uttar Pradesh is development. This was rated as the most important issue for both Dalits and non-Dalits. Overall, the BSP's record on development was seen in a fairly positive light, though the percentage who said that development had improved (31%) is slightly lower than the corresponding percentage from the last election who thought that it had improved under the SP in 2007 (39%).

Overall, Dalits were more likely to say that development had improved than other caste groups, but the difference was not as great as might be expected. For example less than 50 percent of Jatavs thought development had improved, and less than 40 percent of Dalits from other communities thought it had improved, compared to 30 percent of Upper Castes who thought development had improved. The Dalits were thus more favourable towards the BSP in their evaluations of government performance than other communities, but they hardly viewed the BSP through rose tinted glasses.

Evaluations about development appear to have had a strong influence on how Dalits voted. From Table 7 we can see that whereas 75% of Dalits who thought development in UP had improved voted for BSP; only around 40% of those who thought that development was the same or had got worse did so.

Table 7 Development and Vote among Dalits, row percentages

	SP	BSP	BJP	Congress-RLD	N
Development improved	11	74	4	6	599
Development stayed the same	30	39	9	16	454
Development got worse	34	45	8	13	76
Don't know	32	55	7	6	211

Source: Post Poll Survey conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).

All figures are in percent

With respect to other issues we find a similar pattern. Whereas a 78% of Dalits who thought the conditions for farmers had improved voted for BSP; only around 50% of those who thought that conditions for farmers were the same or had got worse did so.

Evaluations of government performance clearly seem to matter then. Although Dalits tended to judge the performance of the BSP more favourably than other communities; they were still quite critical; and with respect to the conditions of farmers and roads there was widespread dissatisfaction among Dalits with the performance of the BSP; with only around 1 in 4 Dalits saying that things had got better.

Taken together, the analysis presented so far suggests that Dalits were distinctly underwhelmed with various aspects of the BSP's term in office. The politics of symbols did not resonate with Dalits, who were largely unimpressed by the construction of statues and parks; and Dalits who were not impressed with the statues were less likely to vote for BSP. The politics of patronage also appears to have cost the BSP votes. It may not have been possible to buy every Dalit a house – but the 'spoils of office' did not go very far, and those Dalits who did not get 'their share' of the resources appear to have punished the BSP by voting for other parties. And thirdly, there is also evidence of a more public policy orientated performance failure. The BSP was embroiled in controversial policies of land acquisition and road construction, as well as corruption scandals, and this appears to have played badly with Dalit voters. In addition Dalits may simply have had high expectations about what a BSP government could deliver in terms of development, and only those who really thought the BSP had delivered excellent improvements were likely to vote for the BSP in significant numbers. In the light of these high expectations, even maintaining the status quo was seen as a failure, with Dalits who thought that things had stayed the same more likely to vote for other parties than for the BSP.

However, we should perhaps treat some of these findings with a degree of caution. It may be that evaluations of different aspects of BSP performance are not as distinct from one another as we assume. Indeed, it may be that some Dalits just held a generally unfavourable view of the BSP, and that the evaluations we have looked at are just a reflection of single underlying negative disposition towards the BSP. In order then to look at whether attitudes

towards development and statues are really distinct or not, we need to examine their impact on support for the BSP simultaneously. This involves conducting multivariate analysis, which is what we undertake in the next section.

Modelling BSP support

In this section we investigate the power of the variables discussed above to predict whether or not Dalits voted for the BSP. Since our primary focus is on why Dalits voted or did not vote for the BSP, rather than why they voted for another party in particular the technique we use is logistic regression, with a binary dependent variable of 'voted for BSP versus voted for another party'. As well as mapping our core analytical objectives there is also a practical consideration, which is the relatively small number of Dalits who reported voting for the Congress or the SP, let alone any of the other parties. That rules out the reliable estimation of a full multinomial model, with effects for each independent variable on support for each of the competing parties.

The logistic regression model allows us to estimate the impact of a wide variety of factors simultaneously. We can thus make reliable inferences about which factors are important when we take into account other factors. This allows us to test whether the bivariate associations that we examined above still stand up and are robust when we consider other factors. For example, do Dalits attitudes towards the statues still influence vote choice when we consider attitudes towards corruption and development. It may be that the latter issues were the driving force of whether or not Dalits voted for the BSP, and once we take into account whether Dalits thought Development had got better or not, attitudes towards the statues are of no consequence.

Our modelling strategy proceeds in two steps. In Model 1 we include in our analysis only the socio-demographic background variables. In Model 2 we then add the political variables to do with symbols, patronage, and performance. Proceeding in this way allows us to examine the extent to which the earlier socio-demographic differences that we observed are explained by the political variables, and if so which ones. For example, were young, urban,

well-off Dalits less likely to vote for the BSP because they missed out on patronage or because of a perceived development failure?

From Model 1 in Table 8 we can see a clear pattern to the structure of Dalit support for the BSP. The results of the multivariate analysis largely confirm the results from the bivariate analysis discussed previously. The beta coefficients marked with an asterisk indicate which variables had a significant impact on whether or not Dalits voted for the BSP, controlling for all the other variables in the model. Taking everything else into account older Dalits were more likely to vote BSP than younger Dalits. In particular Dalits aged 45-59 years old were significantly more likely to vote BSP than Dalits under 30. Well educated Dalits with some college education were significantly less likely to vote for the BSP than illiterate Dalits, and Dalits living in Urban areas were significantly less likely to vote for the BSP than Dalits living in rural areas. In addition rich Dalits (and Dalits who did not want to disclose their income) were significantly less likely to vote for the BSP than poorer Dalits. Although there are not clear differences in voting behaviour between occupational groups, there is some evidence that Dalit Farmers were significantly less likely to vote for the BSP than Dalit professionals, taking everything else into account. However, the clearest effects are to do with income. Taking into account a wide array of different social background factors; the clearest evidence is that it is the more well off sections of the Dalit community who turned their back on the BSP.

In the next section we examine the political correlates of support for the BSP. What was the main factor why Dalits turned their back on the BSP? Was it to do with the statues and parks built by Mayawati, to do with patronage, to do with corruption or to do with development? To what extent do these issues explain why young rich Dalits voted for other parties?

Model 2 in Table 8 presents the results of the full model. The first thing to notice is that from the fit statistics we can see that the addition of the political variables significantly improves the fit to the data. The pseudo R² increases from 5.6 in Model 1 to 18.4 in Model 2, indicating that the new model is able to explain substantially more of the variation in voting behaviour. As before the beta coefficients marked with an asterisk indicate which variables had a significant impact on whether or not Dalits voted for the BSP, controlling for all the other variables in the model.

Table 8 The determinants of Dalit support for the BSP? Logistic regression parameter estimates

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Age				
30 to 44 years	0.19	0.15	0.21	0.16
45 to 59 years	0.58**	0.19	0.39	0.20
60 and over	0.02	0.21	0.04	0.23
Female	-0.06	0.12	-0.01	0.14
Education				
Primary	-0.05	0.19	-0.04	0.20
Secondary	-0.28	0.16	-0.31	0.17
College	-0.46*	0.20	-0.53*	0.23
Urban	-0.46*	0.19	-0.22	0.22
Class				
Business	0.47	0.56	0.69	0.63
Farmers	-0.73*	0.35	-0.27	0.39
Manual	-0.11	0.36	-0.07	0.39
Lower agriculture	-0.59	0.31	-0.29	0.35
Unclassified	-0.40	0.33	-0.20	0.36
Income				
2000 to 4,999	0.08	0.18	0.02	0.19
5000 to 9,999	-0.23	0.19	-0.10	0.22
10,000 and above	-0.60***	0.18	-0.35	0.21
Not disclosed	-1.09***	0.30	1.02**	0.33
Support Statuses				
Somewhat agree			-0.43	0.22
Somewhat disagree			-0.65**	0.22
Fully disagree			-0.52*	0.23
No opinion			-0.18	0.22
Patronage				
Not benefitted			-0.34	0.22
Not hear about scheme			-0.20	0.21
Development				
No difference			-1.01***	0.16
Got worse			-1.04***	0.28
Don't know			-0.84***	0.20
Corruption				
Somewhat corrupt			1.42***	0.20
Not much corrupt			1.86***	0.22
Not at all corrupt			1.88***	0.26
No opinion			1.06***	0.22

Constant	1.08***	0.37	0.67	0.48
Pseudo R Square	0.056		0.184	
Log Likelihood	-862		-745	
Chi square	101 (17)		336 (29)	
N	1340		1340	

Source: Post Poll Survey conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).

From the parameter estimates reported in Model 2 we can see that even when we take all the variables in our model into account, attitudes towards the statues still had a significant impact on whether or not Dalits voted for the BSP. Dalits who did not support the construction of the statues (of which there were many) were significantly less likely to vote for the BSP than Dalits who supported the statues. We also find strong effects for development and corruption. Dalits who thought that development had not improved under Mayawati were significantly less likely to vote for the BSP; and Dalits who thought that the Mayawati government was very corrupt were significantly less likely to vote for the BSP than everyone else. However, when we take into account these factors we find that the patronage variable is not significant. There is no significant difference in support for the BSP between Dalits who benefitted from the scheme and Dalits who did not. This suggests that the bivariate pattern that we observed previously can be accounted for by other factors in the model. Interestingly it is the development variable that best explains the bivariate association between patronage and support for the BSP. One interpretation of this is that Dalits who did not benefit from the social programme schemes tended to think that development had not improved in the state and so were consequently less likely to vote for the BSP. This suggests that patronage may have had an indirect effect on vote choice via Dalits evaluations of development.

It is also interesting to inspect what impact, if any, the inclusion of these political variables has on the magnitude of the socio-demographic variables in Model 1. This comparison helps us to find out the extent to which the political factors help to explain the social differences in voting behaviour. To what extent does Model 2 manage to explain why young rich Dalits voted against the BSP?

Comparing Model 1 and Model 2 we can see that when we control for political factors there are no significant differences by age for whether or not Dalits voted for the BSP. The magnitude of the age effect for those aged 45 to 59 decreases from a highly significant $b=0.58$ in Model 1 to a non significant $b=0.39$ in Model 2. Similarly the magnitude of the effect for the well-off, who earn more than Rs. 10,000 per month declines from a highly significant $b=-0.60$ in Model 1 to a non-significant $b=-0.35$ in Model 2. This suggests that the inclusion of the political variables helps to explain why young, well-off Dalits were less likely to vote for the BSP than other groups.

Carrying out binary mediation analysis (results not reported here) reveals that the age effects and income effects are significantly mediated by attitudes towards corruption. In particular, well-off Dalits were more likely to think that the BSP was corrupt, and – all else being equal – were therefore more likely to vote for other parties.

Conclusion

In trying to explain why so many Dalits failed to vote for the BSP this time we find strong performance effects. In the eyes of many Dalits, particularly the young and the well-off, the BSP did not perform well enough on key issues of governance. We find strongest effects for performance issues relating to corruption and development.

In some ways the results from the 2012 elections illustrate the limitations of caste politics. Without question caste continues to exert a powerful influence on electoral choice. But parties take this support for granted at their own peril. For a long time U.P has been regarded as a developmental failure. But the politics of symbols is not enough to satisfy voters, and governments must deliver on key issues of development. The results of the 2012 elections therefore send a signal that governments would do well to listen to. Performance matters. Voters use elections to hold their governments to account, and even the most loyal of supporters will not vote for their party if they fail to deliver.

Note

The findings presented here are based on a post-poll survey conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi, in Uttar Pradesh. A total of 7291 persons randomly selected from the latest electoral rolls were interviewed, from the second week of February 2012 till the first week of March (after

polling but before counting of votes) in 399 locations in 101 constituencies spread across the state. The Assembly Constituencies and four polling booths within each sampled constituency were selected using the Systematic Random Sampling technique. The respondents were sampled randomly (oversampling to allow for non-completion) from the updated electoral rolls of the selected polling booths. Of the 12768 sampled respondents, 7291 could be interviewed within the stipulated time. The social profile of the respondents interviewed largely matched the demographic profile of the state, except for women. The sample of respondents included 21% Dalits, 17% Muslims, 82 % rural voters and 40% women respondents. The sample profile of voters corresponds more or less to the overall profile of voters in Uttar Pradesh. The interviews were conducted by specially trained field investigators. The respondents were interviewed in the face-to-face interview situation using a structured interview schedule in Hindi. Respondents were mostly interviewed at their home, preferably alone. The voting question was asked using a dummy ballot paper and dummy ballot box.