

PYQ Vault

560

questions

50

days

10

years of PYQs

DAY 25

Party System & Electoral Politics

· 12 questions

Every question carries a **Flow Snapshot** — and a handwritten model answer on the channel.

No PYQ will be unfamiliar.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2016 · 15 marks

Comment on the emergence of Backward classes in the Indian Politics.

89 FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1 Backward Class rise = **Kothari's** “politicisation of caste” → social presence turned into bargaining power
- R2 emergence read as democratic upsurge → representation widens, but unevenly

Body flow

socio-economic roots: zamindari abolition + Green Revolution → intermediate peasant castes → **Rudolph** “bullock capitalists” → two channels: **Charan Singh** kisan politics / **Lohia** quota politics → **Karpoori Thakur**, Janata Dal → Mandal 27% → **V.P. Singh** 1990 → **Jaffrelot** “silent revolution” (leaders from own milieu)

Counter-view

OBCs not cohesive → Yadav dominance vs MBC exclusion → Hindu nationalism as competing identity → BJP social engineering absorbs non-dominant OBCs

Conclusion routes

- R1 **Kaviraj**: hierarchy of castes → “democracy of castes”
- R2 representation widened, justice still pending

The rise of the Backward classes is the case of what Rajni Kothari called the politicisation of caste. It means numerically large intermediate castes turning social presence into bargaining power.

The abolition of zamindari weakened landlord dominance and the Green Revolution empowered intermediate peasant castes: Rudolph & Rudolph name their class base "bullock capitalists" i.e. small landowners with real political weight.

Charan Singh built Kisan politics, a peasant solidarity against urban India, while Ram Manohar Lohia pushed quota politics. Caste based affirmative action carried by Karpoori Thakur and the Janata Dal.

The decisive turn came with the Mandal Commissions identification of OBCs and its 27% reservation, implemented by V.P. Singh in 1990. Christophe Jaffrelot calls this as a "silent revolution".

The emergence, however, remains uneven. OBCs are not cohesive. Dominant Yadavs captured much of the gain, while BCs felt excluded. Hindu nationalism built a competitive identity, & the BJP absorbed non-dominant OBCs through social engineering.

Sudipta Kaviraj's argues that India moved from a hierarchy of castes towards a "democracy of castes" i.e. a real widening of representation.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2017 · 10 marks

State subvention/funding may be an effective instrument in strengthening electoral democracy in India.

📌 **FLOW SNAPSHOT** — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1** money power central to Indian elections → EC unable to fully check spending → state funding proposed as remedy
- R2** fair elections need clean finance → state subvention as the instrument → effective only if partial + conditional

Body flow

what it corrects → cuts corporate dependence + black money → levels field for smaller parties + clean candidates → **Indrajit Gupta Committee** (1998) endorsed in principle → Law Commission + Second ARC carry finance reform forward

Counter-view

not automatic → may fund non-serious / fake parties → hard to monitor → private spending persists → exchequer burden

Conclusion routes

- R1** effective only as partial, conditional, audited funding → works within a reform package, not alone
- R2** strengthens democracy when tied to transparency, spending caps, internal party democracy + firm EC oversight

Money power sits at the centre of India's electoral problems. Money shapes campaign reach, candidate selection and voter contact, while the Election Commission has struggled to control spending fully.

State funding or public financial support to parties or candidates is viewed as the remedy and it can strengthen democracy, though only in a partial and conditional form.

Public support reduces dependence on corporate money, checks black money and creates a level playing field for smaller parties and clean candidates. The Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998) supported state funding in principle, with the law commission and the 2nd ARC carried the electoral-finance debate forward.

Public money may fund non-serious or fake parties, is difficult to monitor and may not end private spending. Instead full funding burdens the exchequer.

State subvention therefore works only as partial, conditional funding, tied to strict audit, transparent donations, spending caps, internal party democracy and firm Election Commission oversight.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2018 · 10 marks

Political personalities are more significant than political parties in India.

8 FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 personality runs through Indian politics, **Nehru** → **Indira** → **Modi** → claim has a real basis

R2 leaders drive electoral waves → but “significant” ≠ “more significant” → put the claim to test

Body flow

charismatic leaders shape waves → slogans *Garibi Hatao* / *Har Har Modi* → mobilisation around a single face → cuts across caste, class, region → **Indira** personalises Congress → **turn:** organisation converts charisma into votes → BJP cadre + resources carry **Modi** → Congress decline = charisma without organisation fails → over-personalisation weakens party from within → **Michels'** “iron law of oligarchy” → intra-party democracy erodes

Counter-view

personality's cross-cutting mass appeal (beyond caste and party) vs party organisation as what converts and sustains power

Conclusion routes

R1 personalities and parties interdependent, not rivals → leadership + institutionalisation together → neither simply more significant

R2 claim only half-true → personality necessary but not sufficient → the real answer is balance

Personality has mattered in Indian politics from J.L. Nehru & Indira Gandhi and Narendra Modi, the claim rests on a real feature of our electoral life.

Charismatic leaders shape electoral waves and slogans like Garibi Hatao and Har Har Modi show how mobilisation gathers around a single face. Personality can also cut across caste, class and regional divisions in a way party programmes manage.

Party organisation is what converts charisma into votes. Modi's appeal was carried by the BJP's cadre and resources, while Congress's decline shows the charisma without organisation cannot last. Excessive personalisation weakens the party from within, deepening what Robert Michels called the "iron law of oligarchy" and eroding intra-party democracy.

Personalities and parties are therefore interdependent, not rivals. Leadership appeal and party institutionalisation work together; neither is simply more significant than the other.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 15 marks

The changing socio-economic profile of our legislators does not augur well for the health of Indian democracy. Comment.

83 FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 **Burke's** microcosm = the yardstick → judge the change against it → verdict: social gain, economic-criminal danger

R2 “does not augur well” only half-true → social widening deepens democracy; money + crime weaken its quality

Body flow

widening recruitment pool → OBC / backward-caste entry ends upper-caste + lawyer + foreign-educated dominance → **Yadav**: plebeianization / democratic upsurge → House nearer Burke's microcosm → but presence ≠ responsiveness for lower orders → upper castes still over-represented, women ~14%, Muslims below share → turn to economic-criminal profile → crorepati dominance (93% above ₹1 cr) → wealth filters entry → **ADR**: ~46% of 18th LS face criminal cases → **Vaishnav** (*When Crime Pays*): costly elections + local problem-solvers → SC: termite to democracy

Counter-view

against the pessimism → social broadening is a genuine democratic gain (microcosm met, Yadav's upsurge) → threat lies not in *who* enters but in money + crime

Conclusion routes

R1 statement half-true → social broadening augurs well; money-and-crime capture does not

R2 keep the widening, curb the muscle + money that distort it → representation must become responsiveness

Edmund Burke saw Parliament as a microcosm of society. By the changing profile of our legislators is a mixed story i.e. socially it deepens democracy, but economically and criminally it endangers it.

OBCs and BCs have entered in large numbers, ending the early dominance of upper-caste, lawyer and foreign-educated members. Yogendra Yadav calls this plebeianization as a democratic upsurge that brings the House closer to Burke's microcosm.

Upper Castes remain over-represented, while women, near 14% & Muslims stay below their share. The graver worry is the economic and criminal profile. Crorepati members dominate, 93% holding family assets above ₹ 1 crore, so wealth increasingly filters entry. ADR data show around 46% of the 18th Lok Sabha face criminal cases.

Milan Vaishnav, in *When Crime Pays*, ties this to costly elections and to candidates seen as local problem-solvers for caste or community. The Supreme Court itself has called such criminalisation a termite to democracy.

The social broadening augurs well; the capture by money and crime does not. The real task is to keep the widening while curbing the muscle and money that now distort it.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 20 marks

Development has overshadowed the influence of caste in electoral behaviour in recent elections. Discuss.

88 FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 recent verdicts fought on *vikas*, welfare, leadership, security → claim: development has replaced caste

R2 Indian vote never single-factor → caste not erased, only reworked inside development politics

Body flow

caste still long-term determinant (rural/state) → **Kothari**: democracy works through society, caste politicised by elites → **Yadav's** “democratic upsurge” (OBC/backward/Dalit entry) → development's real rise → **Vaishnav** “good economics → good politics”, verdicts reward welfare/governance/leadership → two logics combine, not cancel → **Jaffrelot**: caste relevant, form changes → welfare travels through caste/community networks → **Yadav's** “Identity Plus”: caste works alongside development

Counter-view

Banerjee: voters still shaped by caste and religion → development talk sits atop older loyalties → caste not overshadowed at all

Conclusion routes

R1 development gives legitimacy, caste gives voice and networks

R2 combination, not replacement

Recent Lok Sabha elections have been fought on vikas, welfare delivery, strong leadership and national security. This has led many to argue that development has replaced caste as the main driver of the Indian vote.

The claim reflects a real shift, but it overstates it. Indian voting behaviour has never run on a single factor and caste has not been overshadowed so much as reworked inside a new development politics.

Rajni Kothari showed that Indian democracy does not work outside society but through it. Caste became a resource for political mobilization by elites. Casteism in politics is "no more or no less than the politicization of caste."

Yogendra Yadav's idea of a "democratic upsurge" viewed the same force, as intermediate castes, backward classes & Dalits entered electoral competition in growing numbers.

Milan Vaishnav argues that "good economics can make for good politics in India," and recent verdicts reward welfare, governance and leadership over pure caste arithmetic. Christophe Jaffrelot calls that caste remains while its form changes.

Yadav calls this "Identity Plus" politics i.e. caste does not disappear it works alongside development claims. Abhijit Banerjee argues that voters are still strongly shaped by caste and religion & development talk sits atop older loyalties.

Caste has therefore not been overshadowed. Development gives legitimacy but caste still supplies voice and networks.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2020 · 20 marks

To what extent has the inadequate intra-party democracy affected the functioning of Indian democracy?

🔗 FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 parties = core of representation & governance → intra-party democracy = transparency / participation / accountability → its absence turns the damage inward

R2 in India the deficit is real and deep → but “to what extent” → serious, yet not without limits (stake the degree)

Body flow

structural problem set (high-command, dynasty, centralized nominations, weak internal elections) → **Michels** “iron law of oligarchy” → opaque candidate selection + money / muscle / defections → personalization (**Indira** → Congress, intermediate institutions weakened) → factional splits → why it matters: **Sartori** “schools of democracy” + **Scarrow** legitimacy → internal failure erodes democratic legitimacy → weak regulation (Section 29A, RPA) → reform calls (Law Commission 170th Report, internal elections, transparent finance)

Counter-view

internal democracy is not costless → **Duverger** (weakens cohesion) + **Aldrich** (capture by charismatic leaders / interest groups) → the deficit alone cannot carry all the blame

Conclusion routes

R1 deep but not total → weakens representation / candidate selection / accountability from within, not the sole determinant of performance

R2 reform path → internal elections + transparent finance + enforceable regulation repairs much of it

Political parties are the central institutions of democratic representation and governance. Intra-party democracy means internal transparency, participation and accountability within them.

When this is missing, the damage turns inward on the very democracy the party is meant to serve. In India the deficit is real and deep, though its effect, while serious, is not without limits. The reasons are high-command culture, dynastic leadership, centralized nominations and weak internal elections.

Robert Michels' "iron law of oligarchy" explains how power concentrates in a small leadership. Candidate selection then becomes centralized and opaque, while money, muscle power and defections increase. Indira Gandhi personalized the Congress and weakened its immediate institutions and the absence of internal democracy deepens factional splits.

Giovanni Sartori treats parties as "schools of democracy", and Susan Scarow shows that internal democracy strengthens their legitimacy; their internal failure therefore weakens democratic legitimacy at its root.

The deficit persists despite the Law Commission's 170th report & similar calls for internal elections and transparent finance. Maurice Duverger argues that internal democracy can itself weaken party cohesion and John H. Aldrich view that open internal processes can be captured by charismatic figures or interest groups.

The effect is therefore deep, it weakens representation, candidate selection and accountability from within, without being the sole determinant of how Indian democracy performs. Internal elections, transparent finance and enforceable regulation can repair much of it.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2021 · 15 marks

The role of the President of India becomes more significant during a minority government and a coalition government. Explain.

8 FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1 clear majority → formation settled → President's part largely formal
- R2 coalition era since 1989 → no clear mandates → President's discretion moves from formal to decisive

Body flow

no clear majority → role expands → *formation*: whom to invite → assess support letters → proof of majority within fixed time → floor test settles it → judicial insistence curbs arbitrary discretion → role revives at government collapse / withdrawal of support → caretaker arrangements + fresh judgment on who commands the House → **Chakrabarty**: coalitions by political calculation, not design → fluid support, frequent bargaining → President drawn in repeatedly

Counter-view

expanded role is bounded, not political → must act constitutionally, not politically → discretion only to protect the parliamentary majority principle → floor test + judicial oversight as the checks

Conclusion routes

- R1 significance is conditional → formal under a clear majority, active guardian when the numbers are uncertain
- R2 President becomes custodian of the majority principle precisely when the party system cannot deliver one

within a single party in clear majority, government formation is settled and the President's part in it is largely formal. The picture changes once no party wins a clear majority i.e. the recurring situation of India's coalition era since 1989.

The President's role expands and the office's discretion becomes decisive. The President must decide whom to invite to form the government and cannot take claimed support at face value. Support letters are assessed and proof of majority is sought within a fixed time. The floor test then settles the matter and judicial insistence on it limits arbitrary discretion.

It revives whenever a government collapses or partners withdraw support, requiring caretaker arrangements and a fresh judgement on who can command the house. Indian coalitions, as Bidyut Chakrabarty argues, rest on political calculation rather than design. Support is fluid, so bargaining and threats of withdrawal are common.

The President must act constitutionally, not politically; the discretion exists only to protect the parliament majority principle.

The office therefore stays formal under a clear majority & becomes the active guardian of that principle whenever the numbers turn uncertain.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2022 · 20 marks

Electoral behaviour of voters is governed more by the social and economic factors than the political factors. Explain.

83 FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 define electoral behaviour (**Plano & Riggs**) → social + economic form the base, political works upon it

R2 claim holds substantially → identity + material conditions anchor the vote

Body flow

social factors deepest (caste / religion / region → **Morris Jones**: caste-politics reciprocity → **Kothari's** politicization of caste) → economic factors rising (informed, performance-conscious voter → jobs / inflation / welfare → **Kohli, Gupta & Panagariya** → **Vaishnav**: economics up, identity entrenched) → political factors not passive (leadership / campaign → 2019 social consolidation over caste arithmetic)

Counter-view

Banerjee: caste, religion, ethnicity still matter strongly → economics has not displaced identity

Conclusion routes

R1 no single set governs → interaction decides

R2 voter weighs identity + welfare + leadership + performance together → claim partly true; interaction the truer reading

Electoral behaviour is a form of political behaviour shaped by social, economic and psychological factors. Jack C. Plano and Riggs argue how people vote and why they vote that way.

In India, the claim that social and economic factors outweigh political ones holds true. Identity and material conditions form the base on which the vote rests, even as political factors work upon it.

Morris Jones argues that politics has become more important to caste, and caste more essential to politics, than before. Rajni Kothari calls this as the politicization of caste i.e. social identity turned into a democratic resource rather than a ritual survival.

Economic factors have gained ground as the voter grows more informed and performance-conscious. Employment, inflation, prices, welfare delivery and subsidies move voters directly. Atul Kohli stresses economic performance, while Poonam Gupta & Anind Panagariya tie a state's economic record to incumbent success.

Milan Vaishnav calls this as economics is gaining weight, but identity remains entrenched, so good economics can make for good politics without displacing caste or religion.

Leadership, campaign and party still shape results; the 2019 verdict was viewed as social consolidation prevailing over caste arithmetic. Abhijit Banerjee counters that caste, religion and ethnicity continue to matter strongly.

The Indian voter weighs identity, welfare, leadership and performance together, so no single set of factors governs the outcome. Electoral behaviour is explained through their interaction.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2022 · 15 marks

How far is it correct that the regional parties have strengthened Indian democracy and federal system? Substantiate your answer with suitable examples.

⌘ FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 regional parties = channel for India's diversity into democratic politics → strengthened democracy + federalism to a considerable extent, conditional on balance

R2 “how far” asks for degree, not a flat verdict → strengthening runs on two fronts — participation + Centre-State rebalance — bounded by risks

Body flow

democratic front: widened participation → weaker sections + SCs/STs/OBCs/minorities into mainstream → **Jayal** (subaltern democratic frontiers) + **Saranghi** (opening democratic space) → DMK/AIADMK, Tamil Nadu → **federal front:** rebalanced Centre-State → **Sridharan** (bargaining + inter-state territorial coalitions) → **Hewitt & Rai** (reduced misuse of President's Rule / Art. 356) → **Jaffrelot** (kingmakers post-1990s) → BJD Odisha development + TRS Telangana statehood

Counter-view

strengthening not automatic → parochialism, coalition instability, weak policy coherence → **Hasan** (no own ideology → mobilise existing fault lines)

Conclusion routes

R1 strengthened considerably, but gain holds only where regional aspiration is matched by national responsibility

R2 they strengthen democracy + federalism when regional aspirations are balanced with national commitments

Regional parties are the channel through which India's diversity enters democratic politics. They have strengthened both democracy and the federal system, though this gain is real only when they balance regional aspirations with national commitments.

Niraja Gopal Jayal sees subaltern identity-based parties as broadening democratic frontiers and Prakash Sarangi stresses the opening of democratic space. The DMK and AIADMK gave voice to language, welfare and identity claims in Tamil Nadu.

On the federal aspect, they rebalanced Centre-state relations. E. Sridharan argues they reshape this bargaining and build inter-state territorial coalitions, while Vernon Hewitt and Shirin M. Rai view that national dependence on regional parties reduced the misuse of President's Rule under Article 356.

Christophe Jaffrelot shows how they became Kingmakers after the 1990s. BJD drove state-specific development in Odisha; the Telangana Rashtra Samithi secured Telangana statehood.

Regional parties can promote parochialism, cause coalition instability and weaken policy coherence. Zoya Hasan cautions that parties lacking their own ideology may mobilise existing fault lines.

They have therefore strengthened democracy and federalism considerably, but only where regional aspiration is matched by national responsibility.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2023 · 15 marks

The decade 1989–1999 has created an epochal shift in the Indian party system at the national level. Identify the major national trends in the party system during this era.

🔄 FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 1989 ends **Kothari's** “Congress System” → **M. P. Singh's** federal coalition phase opens

R2 epochal shift = one passage, single-party dominance → coalition order; trends read as its facets

Body flow

end of Congress dominance → fragmented mandate (National Front / **V. P. Singh** 1989, minority & short-lived govts) → Mandal 1990 → OBC / social-justice base → Babri demolition + Hindutva → BJP as national alternative → regional parties central (United Front / **Deve Gowda–Gujral**) → 1991 liberalization changes agenda

Counter-view

coalitions not new + instability till 1999 → “epochal rupture” claim qualified

Conclusion routes

R1 shift epochal as durable arrival of federal coalition politics

R2 less a sudden break, more a churn that stabilises at the decade's close (1999 NDA)

The 1989 election ended the stable national dominance that Rajni Kothari has described as the "Congress System" and opened a phase M.P. Singh identifies as a federal coalition system.

The decade's national trends are seen as facets of this single passage from one-party dominance to coalition politics. The National Front under V.P. Singh (1989) showed that no single party could now command a majority and minority & short-lived governments became common. The implementation of the Mandal Commission in 1990 transformed OBC and social-justice politics.

The Babri Masjid demolition strengthened identity politics & BJP rose as a national alternative. The centrality of regional parties, decisive in government formation, seen in the United Front under H.D. Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral. Economic liberalization in 1991 further changed the development agenda.

Coalitions were not new and instability persisted until the 1999 National Democratic Alliance brought relative stability. The shift was epochal less as a sudden break than as the durable arrival of federal coalition politics.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2025 · 20 marks

The decision to conduct Population Census-2027 has reopened the debate on delimitation in India. Discuss its various aspects.

83 **FLOW SNAPSHOT** — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 delimitation not routine → sets each state's Lok Sabha share → decides who holds power in a federation

R2 decades-long freeze on seats → 2027 census lifts it → contest is population vs federal trust

Body flow

delimitation = boundaries + seat distribution → Commissions 1952 / 1963 / 1973 / 2002 → 42nd + 84th Amendment freeze (until first census after 2026) → seats fixed while population grew → disparities: North grew faster, large + urban constituencies, unequal vote value, heavy service burden → 2027 turns it political → North may gain / South fears penalty for population control → reserved seats + women's reservation recalibrated → fairness reaches within states, not just across them

Counter-view

strict democratic equality (seats track population) vs federal trust + unfairness of penalising states that met a national goal

Conclusion routes

R1 balance democratic equality, federal trust and population justice

R2 let representation follow population without breaking federal trust

Delimitation is not a routine redrawing of boundaries. It decides how many seats each state sends to the Lok Sabha, and so who holds power in a federation.

The Population Census - 2027 reopens this question because it ends a freeze that has kept seat numbers fixed for decades. The debate is whether representation should follow population or whether federal trust should limit it.

Delimitation adjusts constituency boundaries and seat distribution. India set up Delimitation Commissions in 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002. But the 42nd amendment froze seat revision and the 84th amendment extended that freeze until after the first census following 2026.

Population changed sharply while seat numbers stood still. Northern states grew faster than southern states. Members serve uneven, often huge constituencies.

The Northern states may gain seats through higher growth, while southern states fear a penalty for their success in population control. Democratic equality and federal balance pull in opposite directions.

Delimitation recalibrates reserved seats and shapes how women's reservation is implemented. It decides not just how many seats a state holds, but who within it is represented i.e. widening the fairness question the redraw must settle.

This ignores federal trust and the unfairness of punishing states that met a national goal. Reform must balance democratic equality, federal trust and population justice.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2025 · 15 marks

Illustrate with examples how political parties in India have played a crucial role in drawing the historically disadvantaged groups into the mainstream political system.

83 FLOW SNAPSHOT – how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 parties as central institution → aggregate demands → convert into representation/office → **Jaffrelot** “silent revolution”

R2 excluded groups + adult franchise → parties turn numbers into power → lower-caste entry frames the answer

Body flow

Congress umbrella (**Kothari**) → accommodates SC/minorities via symbolic co-option → autonomous assertion widens base → Dravidian/DMK mainstream non-Brahmin + backward claims → Mandal makes OBCs a national category → Janata Dal / SP / RJD carry Yadavs, OBCs, Muslims into regional power → **Kanshi Ram's** BSP → Dalit assertion into state power (Mayawati, UP CM) → regional parties platform tribal + linguistic groups

Counter-view

inclusion real but incomplete → **Mehta** “gap between representation and responsiveness” → symbolic presence outruns policy delivery

Conclusion routes

R1 parties central to democratic inclusion (**Zoya Hasan**) → unfinished task: representation → material transformation

R2 drawing-in genuine but partial → next step is responsiveness, not more caste arithmetic

Political parties have been the central institution drawing historically disadvantaged groups into mainstream politics. They aggregate social demands and convert them into representation, tickets and governing office.

Christophe Jaffrelot calls this steady lower-caste entry into power India's "silent revolution". According to Rajni Kothari, Congress worked as a broad umbrella that accommodated SCs & minorities, though largely through symbolic co-option of leaders rather than shared power.

Dravidian parties like the DMK mainstreamed non-Brahmin and backward-caste claims. The Mandal moment turned OBCs into a central national category and Janata Dal, SP and RJD carried Yadavs, backward castes and Muslims into regional power.

Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party converted Dalit assertion into state power. Regional parties gave tribal and linguistic groups their own platform.

Pratap Bhanu Mehta identifies a "gap between representation & responsiveness" i.e. symbolic presence grows faster than real policy delivery.

Parties, as Zoya Hasan argues, remain central to drawing disadvantaged groups into democracy. The unfinished task is to turn representation into material transformation.

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