



Research article

Social and Political Mobilisation on Reservation Policy in Bihar: A Historical Contour

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ABSTRACT



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Presently, reservation stands as one of the significant issues in Indian politics. Its relevance has heightened with political mobilisation centred around reservation politics, particularly in Bihar politics. Bihar, one of the most diverse states in terms of population, is stratified based on caste and class consciousness. The distribution pattern of the reservation system in Bihar has always held a unique position in the prospects of reservation politics in India. The present paper focuses on the historical evolution of the reservation pattern in Bihar. Furthermore, it analyses how socio-political mobilisation has occurred in the shadow of reservation politics. This study also highlights the role of reservation politics in shaping political consciousness. It discusses the pivotal movement on mobilisation in Bihar's social justice policies and emphasises the long-term influence of reservation politics on the state's political environment.

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1. Introduction

Reservation policies have been a contentious issue in Indian politics since independence, and the State of Bihar is no exception. The reservation politics in Bihar has a complex history intertwined with caste, identity, and social justice issues. Bihar is home to a large number of Dalits, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and Economically Weaker Sections, who have historically faced discrimination and marginalisation in society. Reservation policies were introduced to redress historical injustices and ensure greater representation and participation of underprivileged communities in the political and social spheres.

Since Independence, Bihar has witnessed significant changes in its political prospects, and reservation policies have been a central issue in many of these transformations. The state has seen the rise and fall of various political parties, the emergence of caste-based politics, and the implementation of various reservation policies at the local, state, and national levels. These policies have often been the subject of intense political debate and have been used to mobilise voters along caste and identity lines. In this context, it is crucial to understand the politics of reservation in Bihar, including its historical roots, implementation, and impact on society.

However, the implementation of reservation policies has not been without its challenges. The quota system has been criticised for creating a divide between reserved and unreserved categories and for perpetuating the caste system rather than transcending it. Additionally, reservation policies have led to a

perception of reverse discrimination among upper-caste groups, who argue that they are being unfairly penalised for their caste background. Moreover, while reservation policies have helped to create greater political representation for disadvantaged groups, they have not necessarily translated into greater social and economic equality. Bihar remains one of India's poorest and most underdeveloped states, with high unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy. As such, the debate over the effectiveness of reservation policies in bringing about social change remains ongoing.

The politics of reservation in Bihar since Independence has been a complex issue that reflects broader debates around caste, identity, and social justice in India. While reservation policies have helped to increase political representation for underprivileged groups, they have also faced challenges around implementation and their impact on social and economic equality. As such, the issue of reservation remains a crucial and ongoing topic in Bihar's political discourse.

Moreover, the socio-economic disparities persisting within various backward communities in India, despite significant post-colonial progress, necessitate a renewed focus on government intervention aimed at achieving equitable outcomes. Historically, organisations like the Triveni Sangha in Bihar, representing Yadavas, Kurmis, and Koiris, actively sought reservation policies akin to those implemented for non-Brahmins in South India during the British Raj, albeit unsuccessfully. In the pre-independence political context of Bihar, backward classes primarily aligned themselves with the Congress party, reflecting the limited presence of independent

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political leadership within these communities at the time (S. N. Singh, 1991). Karpoori Thakur, a prominent Socialist leader, ignited the issue of OBCs (Other Backward Classes) reservation after independence. This policy became a cornerstone of the Socialist Party's platform, led by Ram Manohar Lohia. Championing the cause of disadvantaged castes, the party successfully rallied OBCs' support, leading to key electoral victories in the 1967 general elections and the 1969 mid-term assembly elections in Bihar. This political triumph not only solidified the Socialist Party's position but also marked the emergence of OBCs as a potent force in Bihar's political arena (S. N. Singh, 1991).

Although in the wake of the 1960s socialist movements that championed OBC rights and their growing electoral power, Harijan politician Bhola Paswan Shastri, recognising their political significance, established a dedicated commission in 1972. Comprising seven members, including Shastri himself, and led by Mungeri Lal, a member of the Bihar Legislative Council, the Backward Classes Commission aimed to address the historical marginalisation of OBCs and recommend measures for their social and economic advancement, complementing existing efforts for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (S. N. Singh, 1991).

However, caste continues to be a potent force in Bihar, deeply influencing both social structures and political dynamics. Viewed as the cornerstone of party support, different caste groups engage in a persistent jostling for social pre-eminence and political control. The state's history is replete with examples of caste-based alliances and mobilisations (Jha & Pushpendra, 2016). Despite recent advancements, caste remains a significant factor in shaping Bihar's political discourse and electoral outcomes.

2. Socialist Movement and Caste and Class

Intersectionality in Bihar

Bihar may not be an economically developed state, but the political consciousness of the people of the state has been attracting the attention of scholars. It has been a state that has unleashed many vital movements and produced great leaders. The class and caste consciousness have both been the dominant features of the politics of Bihar since the colonial period. It cannot be denied that the caste politics and socialist movements in Bihar played a significant role in the Constitution of the Mandal Commission and the implementation of its recommendations by the V.P Singh Government in the Centre.

The emergence of class and caste consciousness in Bihar is evident in the historical development of socialist movements. Originating with the formation of the Socialist Party in 1931. Concurrently, caste consciousness rose with the establishment of Triveni Sangh in 1933, representing a coalition of OBC groups—Yadavs, Koeris, and Kurmis. Other caste-based organisations, such as the Depressed Classes League, Bihar Prantiya Khet Majdoor Sabha, and Adivasi Mahasabha, also emerged during this period (Das, 2018; Haider, 2019).

During the pre-independence era, Kayasthas dominated Bihar's political and social landscape, but the rise of Bhumihar, or Bhavan, particularly through Swami Sahajanand Saraswati's leadership, signalled a shift. The influence of the Bhumihars grew economically and politically, challenging Kayastha's dominance. Additionally, OBCs, including Koeris, Kurmis, and Yadavs, initiated assertion movements. The Triveni Sangh, formed by these OBCs, marked their entry into the political sphere (Chaoudhary & Srikant, 2015).

Post-independence, the Socialist Party played a crucial role in Bihar's politics, advocating for land reforms and challenging

the INC's dominance. The socialist-led movements, such as the 1965–1966 agitation against educational fee hikes and government corruption, reflected growing disillusionment with Congress. The 1974 JP (Jayaprakash Narayan) movement became a turning point, leading to significant political shifts and the decline of the Congress Party in Bihar (Ankit, 2018).

However, the mid-term elections in 1969 and the subsequent years saw Scheduled Castes distancing themselves from the INC, and aligning with socialist parties (Verma, 1991). The 1977 pro-Janata wave further weakened the INC's position in reserved constituencies. The 1974 JP movement, led by the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti, marked a significant student campaign against Indira Gandhi's government and laid the foundation for political figures of the 1990s (Ankit, 2018). The evolving caste and class consciousness in Bihar continued to shape politics and policies of affirmative action, leaving a lasting impact on the country's contemporary political landscape.

2.1 The Socialist Perspective on Reservation Policies

The Socialist movement in Bihar, led by prominent figures like Ram Manohar Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan, and Narendra Dev, effectively highlighted the Congress Party's failure to address labour and marginalized caste issues. Despite their potential to offer an alternative narrative, the trio faced a significant challenge as they did not share a common ideology. Lohia, with his emphasis on Gandhianism, stood out as the most relevant figure, while Narendra Dev rooted his socialism in Marxism. Jayaprakash Narayan advocated for a blend of Gandhianism and Marxism, reflecting the diversity of approaches within the Socialist movement (S. Singh, 2015).

However, to gain a comprehensive understanding of Karpoori Thakur's political stance, one must delve into the internal leadership conflicts within the Socialist bloc. The amalgamation of the Bihar State Backward Classes Federation with Lohia's Samajwadi Party in 1957 underscored the pursuit of 60 per cent reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and religious minorities, emerging as a pivotal agenda in socialist politics (Jha, 2017). This reservation initiative accentuated divisions between factions and led to the estrangement of upper-caste socialist leaders, subsequently integrated into the Congress fold. The discordance in personalities and social backgrounds played a significant role in the disintegration and reconfiguration of socialist politics. The Praja Socialist Party (PSP) had a more measured stance than the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), which was adamantly in favour of a 60 per cent reservation. In this setting, leaders such as Karpoori Thakur and Ram Manohar Lohia discovered a favourable atmosphere in which to vigorously advocate for 60 per cent reservations, taking the lead in campaigning. Popular slogans like "*Lohia-Karpoori ki lalkaar, badlo-badlo ye sarkar*" (Lohia-Karpoori's call, change this government) and Socialist Leader Ram Manohar Lohia came out with the famous slogan, that "*Sansopa ne baandhi gaanth, pichde pawen sau me saath*" (Samyukta Socialist Party is determined to secure 60 per cent reservations for the backwards) resonated with the underprivileged and marginalised groups in society, highlighting the significance of these political narratives (Jha, 2017).

3. Distinct Phases in Bihar's Political Outlook

The political history of post-independence Bihar unfolds in distinct phases. Initially (1947–1967), the Congress party, led by upper-caste leaders, dominated. The second phase (1967–1990) witnessed the gradual decline of Congress and the upper castes, giving rise to the influence of the middle castes. The third phase (1990 onwards) marked the ascent of backward castes in

Bihar's politics. In the 1990s, Congress suffered setbacks, leading to the rise of Janata Dal with leaders like Ram Sunder Das, Lalu Prasad Yadav, Nitish Kumar, and Ram Vilas Paswan (Attri, 2018). However, the consolidation of backward castes, primarily Yadavs, Kurmis, and Koeris, played a pivotal role. Internal conflicts surfaced, dividing the movement into Lalu Prasad Yadav's Janata Dal (Rashtriya Janata Dal) and Nitish Kumar's Samata Party (later Janta Dal United JD (U)) (Alam, 2014). The 1974 JP movement was a turning point, influencing the shift from a forward-backward axis to a backward-backward contest. Caste dynamics in Bihar's political landscape reveal a historical trend of upper-caste dominance. Post-independence, the democratic incarnation of politics in Bihar reflects a gradual inclusion of various caste groups. The power shift to upper-backwards is predicted at the local level, and economic power in rural areas is anticipated to transfer to backward classes (Kumar, 2014).

The Janata period saw instability and violence, signalling a transformation in Bihar's political economy, with backward castes replacing upper castes (Frankel, 1989). The empowerment of backward classes began in the mid-1970s but fully bloomed in the early 1990s, especially under Lalu Yadav's leadership (Kumar, 2005). The 1990s marked a significant shift in caste politics, with backward castes playing a major role in political representation. The rise of backward castes has become a permanent feature in Bihar politics, influencing electoral outcomes and challenging the dominance of upper castes (Kumar, 2005). The evolving social composition of political representation suggests a significant involvement of backward castes in Bihar politics. While some might attribute this to shifts in the ruling party, the elections spanning from 1990 to 2005 illustrated the malleability of political affiliations (Kumar, 2005).

Furthermore, Bihar's political scene from 2005 to January 2024 has been marked by significant shifts and upheavals. After Lalu Prasad Yadav's RJD rule ended in 2005, Nitish Kumar emerged as a key figure, leading the JD (U) alongside the BJP in a coalition government from 2005 to 2013. This period saw improved governance, infrastructure development, and economic growth, bolstering Kumar's image as a "development man." However, in 2013, a realignment saw Kumar join hands with Lalu Prasad's RJD and the Congress, forming the "Grand Alliance" that defeated the BJP. This marked a shift towards identity politics, with caste playing a prominent role in electoral mobilization. However, internal contradictions within the Grand Alliance led to its collapse in 2017, paving the way for Kumar's return to the BJP fold (Dhar, 2024).

Although, once again, Bihar's political scene witnessed two major shifts within less than two years. In August 2022, Nitish Kumar, Chief Minister of Bihar and leader of the Janata Dal (United) (JD(U)), severed ties with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alliance. This move, attributed to ideological differences and political aspirations, paved the way for the formation of a new coalition government, dubbed "Mahagathbandhan," comprising the Lalu Prasad Yadav-led Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), the Indian National Congress, and regional parties. However, the political pendulum swung once again on January 28, 2024, with Nitish Kumar unexpectedly resigning from the Mahagathbandhan and rejoining forces with the BJP to form a new government (Dhar, 2024). This seismic shift, attributed to factors such as internal disputes within the Mahagathbandhan and shifting power dynamics, has experts and observers grappling for insights into Bihar's unpredictable political ecosystem. Since then, the state has witnessed relative political stability under Kumar's leadership.

Nonetheless, challenges like unemployment, agrarian distress, and rising inequality remain, and it is yet to be seen

how they will influence the 2024 elections and the state's future political trajectory. However, envisioning a future where the backward class is excluded from political power becomes challenging. It becomes evident that, for any aspiring ruling party to secure support, ensuring the fair inclusion of backward castes in political representation with a focus on social welfare schemes and infrastructure development is imperative.

4. The Emergence of Backward Politics of Reservation in Bihar

Caste, Class, and Community have always been important factors in India for different reasons. Moreover, they have always proved themselves important and decisive factors having enough potential to influence the working of many institutions of importance, including political institutions. In Bihar, caste and class have remained a significant factor as they played a dominant role in the working Bihar's political system. Political mobilisation for reservation and increased participation of the OBCs in the democratic politics of Bihar go hand in hand. Bihar is rightly regarded as the laboratory of OBC politics and the nursery of the OBC leaders. The OBC politics of Bihar got momentum due to the two milestones of the OBC reservation, namely the Mungeri Lal Commission and the Mandal Commission.

4.1 Kapoori Thakur Social and Political Mobilisation and Reservation Politics

In 1974, Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) led an anti-Congress initiative driven by students calling for the resignation of state Congress governments. This mobilisation resulted in extensive disruptions, characterised by large-scale rallies, strikes, and closures. JP considered his populist endeavour a trigger for what he termed a 'total revolution,' aiming to purify public life in India and dismantle corruption and the authoritative rule of Indira Gandhi. The repercussions of this movement were significant, notably influencing regional parties purportedly advocating for the interests of lower castes. This trend gained prominence in the 1990s, particularly in North India, with Bihar experiencing the most pronounced impact of JP's influence. The contours of this movement played a pivotal role in the evolution of OBC politics into a mass populist movement (Witsoe, 2013).

In 1978, Karpoori Thakur, a member of the Janata Party, implemented the Mungeri Lal Commission report, a pivotal step to address the issues of backward classes in Bihar. This report recommends the classification of backward classes into Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Most Backward Classes (MBCs) (Jha & Pushpendra, 2016). Karpoori Thakur's implementation of state-level reservations based on these recommendations led to widespread agitation by Forward Caste youth and the subsequent downfall of his government. This move triggered conflicting social mobilisations in Bihar and significantly influenced caste-based politics in the ensuing decades, marking the emergence of political figures like Lalu Prasad, Nitish Kumar, and other socialist leaders (Attri, 2018).

Karpoori Thakur's role in introducing reservations for OBC castes was instrumental, making him a champion for the cause of Dalits and OBCs (J. Singh, 2015). However, it also set the stage for intense caste-based politics in Bihar, with OBC castes playing a crucial role. The upper castes strongly opposed the implementation of the Mungeri-Lal Commission Report, leading to a virtual caste war. They were particularly against OBC reservations, as they posed a threat to their traditional dominance (Kumar, 2021). The upper castes also attempted to align with Dalits, propagating the slogan "Agra-harijan bhai bhai, yeh pichhdi jati kahan se aie" (upper castes and Harijans

are brothers, from where have these backward castes cropped up?)" emphasising unity against the perceived threat from backward castes (Kumar, 2021).

The vehement anti-backwards class agitation can be attributed to the Janata Party's rise to power in the post-Emergency Lok Sabha elections in 1977, symbolising the growing influence of backward classes in politics. The upper castes, particularly the Rajputs and Kayashthas, supported the Janata Party in opposition to the Congress led by Mrs Indira Gandhi, who had imposed the Emergency. However, Karpoori Thakur's election as chief minister, representing backward castes, was perceived as a threat by the upper castes to their political and administrative control in the state (Kumar, 2021). However, Thakur's assertion that the backward classes had replaced the forward castes as the dominant force in Bihar politics, signalling the end of the days of "upper caste" dominance, further intensified fear and resentment among the upper castes.

4.2 Political Dynamics of the Sub-Categorization of OBCs in Bihar

The transition from the concept of other backward classes (OBCs) to Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) in Bihar represents a significant evolution in the state's reservation and social justice policies. This transformation was initiated by the visionary leader Karpoori Thakur. Thakur recognised that within the larger OBC category, certain communities remained marginalised and underserved, even after the introduction of reservations. He believed a more nuanced approach was needed to uplift these communities and address their needs. Under Karpoori Thakur's leadership, the Bihar government took the historic step of categorising a subset of OBCs as Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) (Jha & Pushpendra, 2016; Kumar, 2018).

This classification aimed to identify and provide preferential treatment to those OBC communities that were particularly disadvantaged in terms of education, employment, and access to resources. It acknowledged that not all OBCs faced the same level of socio-economic deprivation. Establishing the EBCs category in Bihar differed from the one-size-fits-all approach to reservation policies. It signalled a commitment to a more targeted and inclusive form of affirmative action. This move has had far-reaching implications for the state's social and political landscape, as it recognises the diversity within the OBC community and strives to ensure that the most marginalised sections receive the support they require to improve their socio-economic conditions (Kumar, 2018).

Hence, Karpoori Thakur is regarded as the chief architect of the politics and policy of the OBC reservation in Bihar. As Chief Minister, he sincerely pursued the OBCs reservation's goal. Ram Sunder Das, Thakur's successor as Chief Minister, could not go against the politics of OBCs reservation and similarly committed to implementing the idea, keeping it as the focus of Bihar politics (J. Singh, 2015). The reservation policy, announced in 1977 and implemented in 1978, earmarked 26 per cent of new government jobs for the Backward Classes. Interestingly, the introduced reservation policy recognised the difference in the degree of backwardness of the OBC castes. Under this reservation scheme, more specifically, OBCs would receive 12 per cent, EBCs 8 per cent, women of any category 3 per cent, and economically backward (poor from upper castes) 3 per cent (Blair, 1980).

Although, Karpoori Thakur's implementation of reservation policies marked a transformative period in Bihar's political landscape, leading to the displacement of forward castes from their historical dominance. His assertive stance signified

the end of an era where the "upper caste" controlled public affairs, emphasising a government built on the support of backward castes. The forward castes responded with a mixture of fear and anger (Blair, 1980). Thakur successfully navigated a no-confidence motion in January 1979, but his government eventually succumbed in April due to a combination of a Forward-Harijan alliance and internal Janata party conflicts (Blair, 1980). Despite the brief shift in ministerial control, underlying trends indicated a favourable environment for the Backwards.

Later Nitish Kumar strategically leveraged the potential of the Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), comprising approximately 36.01 per cent of Bihar's population, to consolidate his political standing (Imam, 2024). The EBCs groups emerged as influential vote-swingers, significantly impacting electoral outcomes. Nitish Kumar's calculated approach involved extending affirmative action benefits to EBCs, establishing them, along with Mahadalits, as essential components of his Janata Dal (United) (JD(U)) vote bank. This recognition of the political significance of Mahadalits and EBCs is in alignment with Bihar's traditional caste calculations, reflecting the intricate interplay between caste dynamics and electoral politics in the state (S. Singh, 2022).

The highly anticipated caste survey report of the Bihar government was officially released on October 2, 2023, followed by a comprehensive presentation of its findings in the State Assembly on November 7, 2023. A pivotal aspect of this unveiling was the simultaneous proposal to elevate the reservation cap for backward classes, extremely backward classes, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes from the existing 50 per cent to a revised 65 per cent. This marked proposal reveals a strategic initiative to address social and economic disparities through an increased allocation of reserved quotas. Furthermore, under the new quota structure, Scheduled Castes are allocated 20 per cent, closely aligning with their combined population of approximately 19.6 per cent. Additionally, Scheduled Tribes are entitled to a 2 per cent reservation, reflecting their 1.7 per cent population. Notably, Backward Classes and Extremely Backward Classes jointly secure a 43 per cent job quota, while the specific allocation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) stands at 18 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively. This represents a substantial increase from the prior combined quota of 30 per cent, justified by their collective population constituting 63.1 per cent, as outlined in the comprehensive survey report (Tewary, 2023; Ray, 2023).

However, comparatively, the reservation formula employed by the Bihar government in the past allocated 16 per cent for Scheduled Castes, 1 per cent for Scheduled Tribes, 12 per cent for Backward Classes, 18 per cent for Extremely Backward Classes, and 3 per cent for backwards-class women, a total of 50 per cent. A significant alteration stems from the removal of the separate 3 per cent quota for backwards-class women, which was deemed redundant due to the existing provision of a 35 per cent quota for women of all castes in government jobs and educational institutions. Importantly, the amended bill excludes the central government's mandatory 10 per cent reservation for individuals from economically weaker sections, resulting in a cumulative reservation ceiling of 75 per cent. This strategic adjustment demonstrates a nuanced approach to optimising and rationalising reservation policies for the betterment of marginalised and underrepresented communities within the state (Ray, 2023).

5. Anti-Reservation Protest Shaping the Political Consciousness in Bihar

The anti-reservation protest in Bihar marked a significant episode shaping the political consciousness. In February 1976, the Mungeri LaL Commission highlighted economic backwardness as the main issue for backward castes. Under Jagannath Mishra's leadership, the Congress Ministry formed a sub-committee to study the report and set up a Financial Corporation exclusively for backward caste members. Meanwhile, the Janata Party took political control in the June 1977 Assembly elections (Bharti, 1990; S. N. Singh, 1991).

The Janata Party's election manifesto expressed a commitment to addressing disparities by providing preferential opportunities for education and self-employment to socially and economically disadvantaged sections. The manifesto pledged to reserve 25 to 33 per cent of government service appointments for backward classes (S. N. Singh, 1991). In June 1977, Karpoori Thakur, an OBC leader, assumed the role of Chief Minister of Bihar. Pressured by legislators from backward castes, Thakur, to fulfil the Janata Party's election promise announced that 26 per cent of seats and jobs would be reserved for OBCs, based on the Mungeri LaL Commission's report (Bharti, 1990; S. N. Singh, 1991).

The initial anti-reservation unrest in Bihar occurred during 1977–78, triggered by the announcement of 26 per cent reserved seats, leading to a confrontational situation between backward and upper castes. This period saw widespread armed clashes, arson, and destruction. Originating from students of the upper classes, a caste-oriented movement emerged, driven by increased caste awareness. Consequently, the caste-based reservation system contributed to reinforcing caste consciousness, diverting attention from class-based considerations. Notably, distinct caste confederations emerged, setting backward castes against forward castes. Karpoori Thakur faced opposition from upper castes, although he believed he had successfully united backward caste legislators through his reservation initiative. The matter of reservation escalated into a troubling phase of caste clashes in Bihar, marked by street battles. Youth from upper castes passionately protested against the OBC reservation programme (Bharti, 1990).

6. Conclusion

The politics of reservation in Bihar cannot be understood in isolation from the social cleavages and caste-based mobilisation. Since Independence, reservation politics in Bihar has been a complex and controversial political issue. While reservation policies were introduced to address historical injustices and ensure the representation of marginalised communities in the political and social spheres, implementing these policies has been fraught with challenges and controversies. The Socialist movement, led by figures like Ram Manohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan, played a crucial role in bringing attention to the failures of the Congress Party in addressing labour and caste issues. However, internal conflicts and divergent ideologies within the Socialist bloc posed challenges to presenting a unified alternative narrative.

Furthermore, the role of key figures like Karpoori Thakur, who championed the cause of OBCs and played a pivotal role in implementing reservation policies, cannot be overstated. The introduction of reservation policies, especially the implementation of the Mungeri Lal Commission report by Karpoori Thakur in 1978, marked a transformative period in Bihar's political prospects. This move, while aimed at addressing historical injustices and increasing representation for the

backward classes, triggered intense social and political conflicts. The resistance from upper castes, who perceived it as a threat to their traditional dominance, resulted in significant anti-reservation protests, highlighting the deep-seated caste divisions in the state. Thakur's leadership, however, faced significant opposition from upper castes, leading to a virtual caste war. The subsequent political developments, including the rise of leaders like Lalu Prasad, Nitish Kumar, and Ram Vilas Paswan, showcase the enduring influence of caste dynamics on Bihar's political discourse.

The distinct phases of Bihar's political history, marked by the dominance of Congress and upper castes, the rise of middle castes, and the ascent of backward castes, highlight the dynamic nature of the state's politics. The 1990s, especially under leaders like Lalu Prasad Yadav, witnessed a significant shift, with backward castes playing a central role in political representation. However, the trajectory of reservation politics in Bihar reflects the complex interplay of historical legacies, political ideologies, and social realities. As the state continues to navigate these complexities, the issue of reservation remains a crucial and ongoing topic in Bihar's political discourse, shaping the broader narrative of caste, identity, and social justice in the region.

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