

Analysis Of Koeri, Kushwaha And Kurmi Politics Of Bihar

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I. Executive Summary

This paper explores the sociopolitical development of Bihar, emphasizing the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities, which have been instrumental in changing the political landscape of the state. At the outset of the research, a historical summary of Bihar's caste politics is given, emphasizing the shift from upper-caste domination to the emergence of Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The transformative impact of significant events is examined, including the execution of the **Mandal Commission** findings and the leadership of individuals like Nitish Kumar and Upendra Kushwaha.

These communities' socioeconomic goals and calculated mobilization have brought about important changes in election behavior, governance, and policymaking. Policy ideas for promoting inclusive development are examined, along with caste-based tensions, political fragmentation, and intra-OBC rivalries. As the cornerstones of Bihar's future development, the paper ends by highlighting the necessity of shifting away from caste-based politics and toward issue-driven government, supporting social harmony, economic empowerment, and education.

Keywords: Caste Politics, Koeri, Kushwaha, Kurmi, Bihar Politics

II. Introduction

A. Brief History of Caste Politics in Bihar¹

Caste has been a defining feature of Bihar's socio-political landscape since the colonial era. Historically, Bihar was characterized by a rigid caste hierarchy, where upper castes such as Brahmins, Rajputs, Bhumihars, and Kayasthas wielded significant social and economic power. The lower castes, including Dalits and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), remained marginalized both economically and politically. However, the mid-20th century witnessed the beginning of a socio-political awakening among the lower castes, primarily due to the spread of education and agrarian reforms.

Post-independence, the Congress party dominated Bihar's political sphere, with upper-caste leaders occupying key positions. However, the socio-economic grievances of lower castes found expression through grassroots movements. The rise of socialist leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan and Karpoori Thakur² marked a turning point in Bihar's caste politics (Jaffreot, 2003). The 1970s saw the emergence of backward caste politics³, largely driven by the implementation of land reforms and the growing influence of the Janata Party, which emphasized caste-based equity. This period also laid the groundwork for the Mandal Commission report's implementation in the 1990s, which further solidified the political identity of OBCs.

The Mandal era redefined Bihar's political dynamics, with caste-based parties gaining prominence. Leaders like Lalu Prasad Yadav (representing Yadavs) and Nitish Kumar (representing Kurmis) capitalized on this shift by mobilizing backward caste communities (Yadav, 2011). The focus on caste identities in electoral mobilization became a hallmark of Bihar politics, with political parties forming alliances⁴ based on caste equations rather than ideological congruence.

¹ [Caste Politics](#)

² [Karpoori Thakur](#)

³ [Rise of Backward caste](#)

⁴ [Political Alliances](#)

B. Socio-Political Structure of Bihar

Bihar's socio-political framework is deeply intertwined with its caste composition, which plays a decisive role in shaping its political narrative and governance dynamics. According to the 2011 Census⁵, Other Backward Classes (OBCs) constitute around 51% of the state's population, while Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) make up 16% and 1%, respectively. The upper castes, comprising approximately 15% of the population, have historically held significant influence over socio-economic and political spheres despite their smaller numbers.

The state's electoral politics have been dominated by caste-based coalitions, reflecting a transition from upper-caste dominance to the assertion of backward castes. This shift became particularly pronounced after the 1990s, as caste alliances emerged as a critical factor for electoral success. Political parties like the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)], and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have relied on caste-based mobilization to secure their political bases.

The Rashtriya Janata Dal, under the leadership of Lalu Prasad Yadav, has traditionally drawn its support from Yadavs and Muslims, forming a strong electoral alliance. Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United) has built its voter base among Kurmis, Koeris, Dalits, and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), leveraging these caste groups for sustained political success. The Bharatiya Janata Party, while primarily appealing to upper-caste voters, has expanded its influence among backward-caste communities through strategic alliances and outreach efforts.

This interplay of caste and politics continues to define Bihar's socio-political landscape, making it a unique and dynamic state in India's democratic framework.

C. Demographic Strength of Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi Communities

OBCs, which include the Kurmi, Kushwaha, and Koeri communities, make up a sizable section of Bihar's population. Traditionally, the Kurmis, who are regarded as somewhat wealthy, have been landowners and agriculturists, whilst the Koeris and Kushwahas are mostly involved in agriculture and small-scale trading. According to the 2023 Caste Census Report⁶ of Bihar, Kushwaha (Koeris) and Kurmi comprises 4.21% and 2.87% respectively of the state's overall population.

Due to the concentration of these populations in central and southern Bihar, they have electoral significance in these areas. Their enormous population gives them the ability to affect the results in a number of important seats, particularly in rural areas. These communities' electoral importance stems from both their collective voting power and their capacity to mobilize votes.

D. Role of these communities in Bihar Politics

The Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities have played a crucial role in shaping Bihar's political alliances over the past few decades, particularly with the decline of upper-caste dominance and the rise of Other Backward Classes (OBC) politics. These communities have become pivotal in determining electoral outcomes due to their significant population and growing political assertion.

⁵ [Census 2011](#)

⁶ [2023 Caste Census Report of Bihar](#)

Nitish Kumar, a prominent Kurmi leader, has been instrumental in politically mobilizing the Kurmi community through his leadership in the Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)]. His emphasis on backward caste unity and welfare-focused governance has secured strong support from this group. Similarly, leaders like Upendra Kushwaha have emerged as influential figures for the Koeri and Kushwaha communities, further amplifying their political significance.

Political alliances in Bihar often hinge on the support of these communities. The JD(U)-BJP coalition, for instance, has leveraged the backing of these groups to consolidate its voter base, while the Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) led by the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) has also sought to appeal to these communities through strategic representation and policy initiatives. These alliances reflect the importance of the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities in shaping Bihar's contemporary political landscape.

The rise of these communities is attributed to several factors, including:

1. Mandal Commission and Reservation Policies: The implementation of the Mandal Commission report provided these communities with greater access to education and employment, fostering socio-political consciousness.
2. Grassroots Movements: Agrarian and cooperative movements played a role in uniting these communities and providing a platform for political participation.
3. Leadership and Political Representation: The rise of leaders like Nitish Kumar and Upendra Kushwaha provided these communities with political visibility and influence.

III. Historical Evolution of Political Participation

A. Pre-Independence Era

In pre-independence Bihar, caste dynamics significantly influenced the socio-political landscape, with the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities, primarily engaged in agriculture, playing an active role in challenging the oppressive feudal system. These communities were involved in **peasant movements** that sought land reforms and resistance to upper-caste landlords' exploitative practices. The anti-feudal struggles, led by backward-caste leaders, laid the groundwork for political awakening among these groups, who demanded greater representation and the abolition of feudal privileges (Jha, 2017).

The early 20th century witnessed the spread of education and the efforts of social reformers like **Swami Sahajanand Saraswati**, who **mobilized lower-caste farmers against the zamindari system**, advocating for social and economic justice (Jaffrelot, 2003)⁷. By the 1930s, organizations like the **Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha** began to represent the rights of peasants, and communities like the Koeris, Kushwahas, and Kurmis began to engage more actively in local governance, laying the foundation for their political rise post-independence.

B. Post-Independence Era

In the immediate post-independence period, the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities remained politically marginalized due to the dominance of upper-caste leaders in the Indian National Congress,

⁷ [Jaffrelot, 2003](#)

which kept power concentrated in the hands of the elite. These backward castes faced socio-economic disadvantages, including limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, resulting in their underrepresentation in legislative bodies (Chandra, 2004).

However, the 1970s and 1980s saw a significant shift with the rise of backward caste movements, especially after the implementation of the **Mandal Commission's recommendations**, which called for **27% reservation for OBCs** in government jobs and educational institutions. Leaders like Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad Yadav played crucial roles in uniting backward castes and forming powerful political coalitions like the Janata Dal and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). This marked a transformation in Bihar's political landscape, with increased political participation from the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities.

These movements resulted in policies focusing on education, land reforms, and welfare schemes, which were central to improving the socio-economic conditions of these communities (Yadav, 2011; Verma & Gupta, 2019).

C. Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha constituencies dominated by these three communities

Lok Sabha Constituencies:

1. **Karakat⁸**: This constituency has approximately **200,000 voters** each from the Koeri, Rajput, and Yadav communities. It has witnessed contests between leaders like Mahabali Singh and Upendra Kushwaha, both from the Koeri caste.
2. **Ujjarpur⁹**: Comprising six assembly segments, Ujjarpur has a significant presence of Kushwaha and Yadav voters. The constituency has been represented by leaders from these communities, reflecting their electoral importance.

Vidhan Sabha Constituencies:

1. **Bhabua¹⁰**: Located in Kaimur district, Bhabua constituency has a substantial population of Koeri and Kurmi voters, making them a decisive factor in elections.
2. **Warisnagar¹¹**: Situated in Samastipur district, this constituency is influenced by Koeri and Kurmi voters, who play a crucial role in determining electoral outcomes.
3. **Biharsharif¹²**: In Nalanda district, Biharsharif is a Koeri-dominated constituency. It has been represented multiple times by leaders from the Bharatiya Janata Party belonging to the Koeri community.

IV. Political Landscape and Key Leaders

A. Emergence of Key Political Leaders

1. Karpoori Thakur (Kurmi) and His Legacy

Karpoori Thakur, a prominent Kurmi leader, was a pivotal figure in Bihar's backward caste politics. Known for his simplicity and grassroots connection, Thakur emerged as a leader of the marginalized

⁸ [Karakat](#)

⁹ [Ujjarpur](#)

¹⁰ [Bhabua](#)

¹¹ [Warisnagar](#)

¹² [Biharsharif](#)

sections during the post-independence era. His tenure as the Chief Minister of Bihar (1970-1971 and 1977-1979) was marked by pro-poor policies and initiatives aimed at empowering backward castes. One of his significant contributions was the implementation of reservations for OBCs in government jobs and educational institutions, which laid the groundwork for future social justice policies in Bihar (Jaffrelot, 2003).

Thakur's political ideology and legacy continue to influence Bihar's politics. He is remembered as a leader who prioritized the welfare of backward castes over political expediency. His emphasis on education and social justice inspired a generation of backward caste leaders, including Nitish Kumar, who later dominated Bihar's political landscape (Yadav, 2011).

2. Rise of Nitish Kumar and His Influence on Kurmi Politics

Nitish Kumar, a key figure in contemporary Bihar politics, rose to prominence in the 1990s as a leader of the Janata Dal. A Kurmi by caste, Kumar played a crucial role in mobilizing backward castes, particularly the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities, under the broader OBC category. His political strategy focused on creating a coalition of EBCs (Extremely Backward Classes) and Dalits, thereby challenging the dominance of upper castes and Yadavs.

As the Chief Minister of Bihar (since 2005, with a brief interruption), Nitish Kumar has been instrumental in transforming Bihar's socio-economic landscape. His governance model, often referred to as the "**Bihar Development Model**", focused on infrastructure development, law and order, and social welfare. Kumar's ability to forge alliances with both the BJP and RJD at different points reflects his pragmatic approach to politics (Chandra, 2004)¹³. His leadership has ensured sustained political representation for Kurmis and other backward castes.

3. Upendra Kushwaha and the Rise of the Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP)

Upendra Kushwaha, a prominent Koeri leader, founded the Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP) in 2013 after breaking away from the JD(U). His rise marked the assertion of the Koeri community in Bihar's political landscape. The RLSP primarily aimed at addressing the socio-economic grievances of the Koeri and Kushwaha communities, who felt marginalized in the existing political setup.

Kushwaha's alliance with the BJP during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections was a strategic move that helped the NDA secure a significant share of backward caste votes. Despite his initial success, the RLSP's influence waned in subsequent elections due to internal conflicts and the shifting political dynamics in Bihar (Verma & Gupta, 2019).

4. Other Influential Leaders from the Koeri and Kushwaha Communities

Several other leaders from the Koeri and Kushwaha communities have played crucial roles in Bihar's politics. Leaders such as Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav, a prominent figure in the Yadav-Koeri alliance, and Nagmani, a former Union Minister, have contributed to the political mobilization of these communities. Their involvement in various political parties, including the Congress, RJD, and JD(U), highlights the fluid nature of caste-based politics in Bihar.

¹³ [Chandra, 2004](#)

B. Role in Shaping the Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) and NDA Coalitions

The Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) have both relied heavily on the support of backward caste communities, including Koeris, Kushwahas, and Kurmis. The Mahagathbandhan, initially formed in 2015, brought together the JD(U), RJD, and Congress, resulting in a significant electoral victory by consolidating backward caste votes.

However, Nitish Kumar's subsequent return to the NDA in 2017 altered the political equation. The NDA coalition, comprising the BJP, JD(U), and RLSP, focused on mobilizing backward caste votes by highlighting development and governance. The shifting alliances and realignments demonstrate the central role of Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities in Bihar's coalition politics (Jha, 2017).

C. Strategies of Political Parties to win votes of these communities

1. Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)]

- a. Leadership Promotion: The JD(U) has historically relied on Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, a Kurmi leader, to consolidate the **Luv-Kush vote bank**. Nitish Kumar's political appeal to these communities is based on his identity as a backward caste leader who has consistently championed the rights of OBCs through policy measures and welfare schemes. His leadership has been pivotal in uniting Koeris, Kushwahas, and Kurmis under the JD(U) banner, ensuring their continued electoral support.
- b. Inclusive Governance: JD(U)'s development-focused governance has played a crucial role in maintaining the loyalty of these communities. Initiatives like improved rural infrastructure, electrification, and access to education have significantly benefited backward caste communities. Nitish Kumar's slogan of "**Development with Justice**" (**Vikas ke Saath Nyay**) has resonated well with these groups.
- c. Political Alliances: Nitish Kumar's shifting alliances—from partnering with BJP in the early 2000s, to joining the Mahagathbandhan with RJD and Congress in 2015, and later returning to the NDA—reflect his pragmatic approach to maintain power while safeguarding his Luv-Kush support base. The alliance realignments have often been aimed at preventing the fragmentation of these votes.

2. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

- a. Leadership Strategy: To challenge Nitish Kumar's dominance over the Luv-Kush vote bank, the BJP appointed Samrat Choudhary, a prominent Kushwaha leader, as the party's state president. This move was aimed at gaining direct appeal among the Kushwaha community, who form a substantial segment of Bihar's electorate.
- b. Targeted Campaigns: The BJP has organized caste-specific rallies and yatras, such as the '**Luv-Kush Yatra**,' to connect with Koeri and Kurmi voters on both cultural and political fronts. These events are often framed in a way to promote a shared identity among these groups, distinct from Nitish Kumar's leadership.



Image 1: Luv Kush Rath Yatra¹⁴

- c. Expanding Base through Social Engineering: The BJP has worked to expand its vote base by forming alliances with smaller parties led by influential leaders from backward caste communities, including the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) under Chirag Paswan and Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP) under Upendra Kushwaha (before RLSP merged back with JD(U)). This strategy allowed the BJP to make inroads into Nitish Kumar's core vote bank during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.
- d. Development and Welfare Policies: The BJP has emphasized central government welfare schemes, such as **PM Kisan Samman Nidhi**, **Ayushman Bharat**, and **housing schemes**, which have a direct impact on rural populations where Luv-Kush communities are dominant.

3. Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)

- a. Social Justice and Caste Inclusion: The RJD, under the leadership of Lalu Prasad Yadav and later Tejashwi Yadav, has consistently focused on social justice as a political theme. While the party's core support base has traditionally been Yadavs and Muslims, it has made deliberate efforts to attract Luv-Kush communities by fielding candidates from these groups and ensuring their representation in party leadership.
- b. Candidate Selection Strategy: In the 2020 Vidhan Sabha elections, the RJD fielded a significant number of candidates from the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities to broaden its appeal beyond its traditional vote bank. This strategy was aimed at weakening JD(U)'s hold over these communities.
- c. Anti-BJP and Anti-Nitish Narrative: RJD has tried to position itself as a viable alternative by criticizing both Nitish Kumar and the BJP over issues like unemployment, rural distress, and migration. The party has highlighted the perceived failures of Nitish Kumar's government in addressing the concerns of backward caste communities.

4. Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) [LJP(RV)]

- a. Community-Centric Leadership: The LJP, founded by Ram Vilas Paswan and now led by Chirag Paswan, has traditionally drawn support from Dalit communities. In recent years, Chirag Paswan

¹⁴ [Luv Kush Rath Yatra](#)

has sought to expand the party's influence among other backward caste groups, including Koeris, Kushwahas, and Kurmis, by promoting a broader coalition of marginalized communities.

- b. Alliance Politics: During the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections, Chirag Paswan's decision to contest independently while maintaining support for BJP candidates was a tactical move aimed at consolidating anti-Nitish votes. The LJP has also aligned with smaller regional parties to increase its appeal among backward castes.
- c. Electoral Positioning: The LJP has presented itself as a young and dynamic alternative, with Chirag Paswan's leadership appealing to the youth from backward communities. The party's campaign slogans and outreach programs have emphasized the need for new leadership and governance reforms.

5. Smaller Regional Parties

- a. Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP): Before merging with JD(U), Upendra Kushwaha's RLSP played a key role in mobilizing the Koeri vote bank. The party's alliance with BJP in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections helped the NDA secure a significant portion of backward caste votes.
- b. Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM): Led by former Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi, HAM has also been a significant player in Bihar's caste politics, representing the Dalit and Mahadalit communities. The party has periodically allied with both JD(U) and RJD to strengthen its position.

D. **BJP's Strategy to win these Vote Banks and its Result**

1. In March 2023, the BJP appointed Samrat Choudhary, a prominent Kushwaha leader, as its Bihar state president. This move aimed to attract the Kushwaha community by positioning one of their own in a significant leadership role.¹⁵
2. The BJP has organized rallies and events in regions with substantial Luv-Kush populations. For instance, Union Home Minister Amit Shah planned a rally in Nalanda, Nitish Kumar's home district, to engage Kurmi voters directly.¹⁶
3. The party has inducted leaders from the Luv-Kush communities to signal inclusivity and representation. Notably, Upendra Kushwaha, a significant figure among the Kushwahas, has been associated with the BJP, enhancing its appeal within the community.¹⁷

Electoral Outcomes:

Lok Sabha Elections:

1. **2009**¹⁸: The BJP, in alliance with Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)], secured a significant victory, winning **32 out of 40 seats** in Bihar.
2. **2014**¹⁹: The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won **31 seats**, with the **BJP** securing **22 seats**.
3. **2019**²⁰: The NDA achieved a landslide victory, winning **39 out of 40 seats** in Bihar.

¹⁵ [Leadership Appointment by BJP](#)

¹⁶ [BJP's bid](#)

¹⁷ [Prominent Leader](#)

¹⁸ [2009 LS Elections](#)

¹⁹ [2014 LS Elections](#)

²⁰ [2019 LS Elections](#)

Vidhan Sabha Elections:

1. **2010:** The NDA, comprising the BJP and JD(U), secured a majority, winning **206 out of 243 seats**.
2. **2015²¹:** The **BJP** contested separately and won **53 seats**, while the **Grand Alliance**, including JD(U), RJD, and Congress, secured **178 seats**.
3. **2020:** The **NDA, with JD(U)** back in the alliance, won **125 seats**, securing a narrow majority.

E. Caste-Wise Voting Patterns in Bihar (Based on Exit Polls)

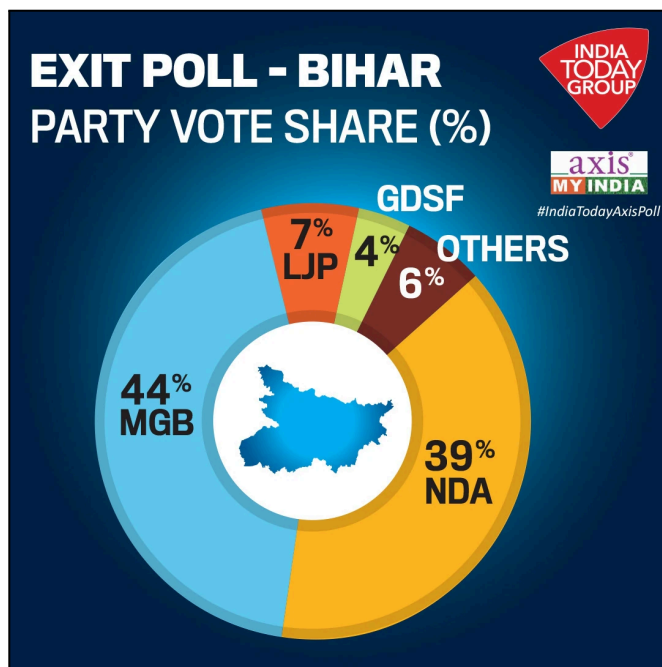


Image 2: Exit Poll- Bihar Assembly Election 2020²²

1. Upper Castes (Brahmins, Rajputs, Kayasthas, and Bhumihars)

- a. The upper castes have historically been a strong voter base for the BJP. In the **2020 Bihar Assembly elections**, around **70-75%** of upper-caste voters supported the **NDA alliance**, primarily due to the BJP's appeal as a pro-Hindu, nationalist party and its focus on governance and economic development.
- b. The upper-caste support for the BJP remains robust, as evidenced by pre-poll surveys and political analyses. The JD(U)'s presence in the alliance bolstered its outreach to non-BJP upper-caste voters in rural constituencies.

2. Yadavs

- a. The Yadav community, forming around **14%** of Bihar's population, has been the traditional vote bank of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). In the **2020 Assembly elections**, approximately **80-85%** of Yadavs voted for the **RJD-led Mahagathbandhan**.

²¹ [2015 VS Elections](#)

²² [Exit Poll Result](#)

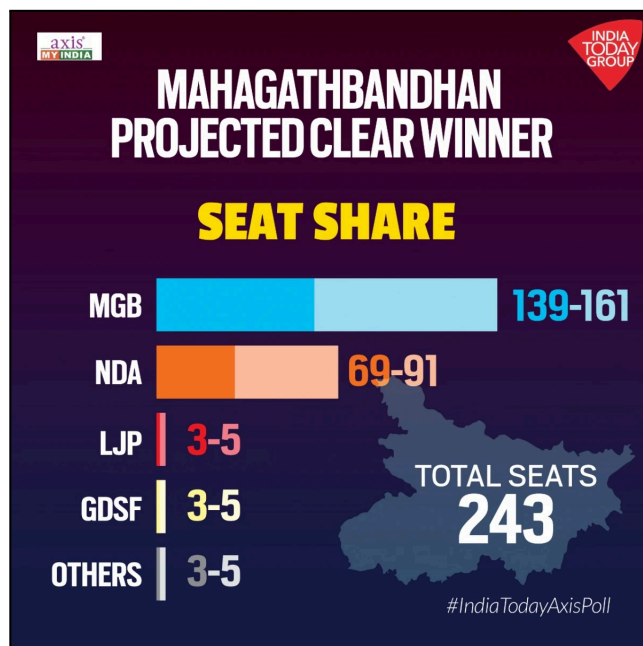


Image 3: Seat Share²³

- b. The RJD remains the dominant choice among Yadav voters, though the BJP has made attempts to dent this support by promoting prominent Yadav leaders within its fold and forming alliances with smaller Yadav-centric parties.

3. Muslims

- a. They constitute around **16%** of the population, and have overwhelmingly supported the RJD-Congress alliance in both the 2020 Assembly and 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Around **80%** of Muslim voters preferred the **Mahagathbandhan in 2020**, driven by concerns over communal harmony and minority rights.
- b. The INDIA bloc (RJD-Congress-Left alliance) is expected to retain the bulk of Muslim votes, given the community's consistent opposition to the BJP's policies on issues such as CAA-NRC.

4. Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi (Luv-Kush Bloc)

- a. The Luv-Kush bloc, comprising Koeris, Kushwahas, and Kurmis, makes up around 15-18% of Bihar's population. In the **2020 elections**, **60-65%** of Kurmis and Koeris voted for the **JD(U)-BJP alliance**. The BJP also gained a significant portion of this vote bank due to its alliance with the JD(U) and targeted outreach.
- b. With Nitish Kumar rejoining the INDIA bloc in 2022, the Luv-Kush bloc expected to show a split in voting preferences. While a majority still back the JD(U), the BJP is likely to retain a portion of the Kushwaha vote through leaders like Samrat Choudhary and Chirag Paswan's outreach efforts to backward castes.

5. Dalits

- a. They form about **16%** of Bihar's population, divided into **sub-groups** like **Mahadalits and Paswans**. The Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), founded by Ram Vilas Paswan, has traditionally

²³ [Seat Share](#)

commanded significant support among Paswans. In the **2020 Assembly elections**, **70-75%** of **Paswan** voters backed the **LJP**, while **Mahadalits** largely sided with **JD(U)**.

- b. The LJP (Ram Vilas) led by Chirag Paswan expected to retain Paswan votes, while the JD(U) continue to hold sway over Mahadalit groups. The BJP's alliance with the LJP further solidifies its support among Dalits.

6. Extremely Backward Castes (EBCs)

- a. The EBCs, constituting around **30%** of Bihar's population, have been a decisive factor in Bihar's elections. This heterogeneous group has historically supported Nitish Kumar due to his targeted welfare schemes for EBCs. In the **2020 Assembly elections**, **55-60%** of EBCs voted for the **JD(U)-BJP alliance**.
- b. While the JD(U) continues to be popular among EBCs, the BJP has also made significant inroads by emphasizing national issues and welfare policies.

V. Caste-Based Political Strategies

A. Creation of Political Blocks

One of the key political strategies adopted by leaders from Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities has been the consolidation of these castes into a unified political block. This strategy was primarily aimed at countering the dominance of upper castes and other influential OBC groups, particularly the Yadavs. Leaders like Nitish Kumar and Upendra Kushwaha have emphasized the socio-political unity of these communities to ensure better representation in legislative bodies and greater access to state resources (Jaffrelot, 2003).

Caste-based organizations such as the Kurmi Mahasabha played a crucial role in mobilizing these communities. These organizations not only fostered a sense of identity among Kurmis, Koeris, and Kushwahas but also acted as pressure groups, influencing political parties to address their demands. The success of this consolidation strategy is evident in the electoral outcomes of the 1990s and 2000s, where parties led by leaders from these communities managed to secure significant vote shares (Jha, 2017).

B. Role of Caste-Based Organizations and Unions

Caste-based organizations and unions have historically played a significant role in the political mobilization of backward castes in Bihar. The Kurmi Mahasabha, for instance, emerged as a prominent platform advocating for the rights and interests of Kurmis. Similarly, various regional organizations representing Koeris and Kushwahas worked towards unifying these communities under a common political agenda.

These organizations often organized rallies, seminars, and conventions to highlight issues such as land reforms, educational access, and political representation. Their efforts not only increased political awareness among backward caste members but also created a support base for leaders who championed their cause (Chandra, 2004).

C. Electoral Behavior

The voting behavior of the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities has evolved, influenced by changes in socio-economic conditions and political leadership. In the initial decades post-independence,

these communities largely supported the Congress due to its role in India's freedom struggle. However, dissatisfaction with the Congress's inability to address caste-based inequalities led to a shift in allegiance during the 1970s and 1980s.

The rise of the Janata Dal and, later, the RJD and JD(U), saw these communities aligning with parties that promised greater representation and socio-economic upliftment. The implementation of the Mandal Commission report further solidified their support for parties advocating backward caste rights (Yadav, 2011). In recent years, however, there has been a noticeable diversification in voting patterns, with sections of these communities also supporting the BJP, especially after the formation of alliances with regional leaders.

D. Reservation Politics

The demand for reservations in education, government jobs, and local governance has been a central theme in the political discourse of the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities. While these communities benefited from the implementation of OBC reservations following the Mandal Commission report, they have continued to demand an increase in the reservation quota, citing socio-economic disparities and population growth.

Political leaders representing these communities have frequently raised the issue of sub-categorization within the OBC category to ensure equitable distribution of reservation benefits. The rationale behind this demand is to prevent dominant OBC groups from cornering a disproportionate share of the benefits, thereby ensuring that marginalized sections within the OBC category, such as Koeris and Kushwahas, also gain access to opportunities (Jha, 2017).

VI. Key Political Issues and Challenges

A. Economic Development and Employment

The Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities have consistently demanded greater economic development, particularly in the agricultural and industrial sectors. Historically engaged in farming, these communities have advocated for policies that enhance agricultural productivity, ensure fair pricing for their produce, and improve access to credit and infrastructure. Despite some progress in rural infrastructure under various state governments, issues such as inadequate irrigation facilities, limited access to modern farming equipment, and fluctuating market prices continue to hinder economic growth (Jha, 2017).

In addition to agriculture, there has been a growing demand for industrial development and job creation in non-agricultural sectors. The younger generation from these communities, especially those migrating to urban centers, seeks employment opportunities in industries, services, and government sectors. Consequently, political leaders have emphasized skill development programs, entrepreneurship schemes, and reservations in private sector jobs to address these demands (Verma & Gupta, 2019).

B. Unemployment and Migration Issues

Unemployment remains a significant issue for the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities. With the **stagnation of agricultural incomes** and the **lack of sufficient industrial growth** in Bihar, many families have faced economic hardship. This has led to large-scale migration of laborers to other states,

particularly to urban centers in northern and western India, where they seek employment in construction, transportation, and small businesses.

The migration trend has socio-political implications, as it impacts the local economy and changes the demographic profile of rural Bihar. Political parties have often used the issue of migration to highlight the need for local job creation and better economic opportunities. Promises of industrial development and employment generation have become key electoral issues in constituencies with high rates of migration (Chandra, 2004).

C. Caste Rivalries and Social Tensions

The socio-political rise of Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities has often resulted in tensions with dominant upper castes and Dalits. Historically, upper castes such as Brahmins, Rajputs, and Bhumihars held significant economic and political power. The assertion of backward castes through political mobilization and reservation policies challenged this dominance, leading to periodic caste-based conflicts. At the same time, relations with Dalits have also been complex. While both groups share a history of socio-economic marginalization, competition for political representation and government benefits has occasionally created friction. Political parties have attempted to mediate these tensions by forming caste coalitions that include both backward castes and Dalits, but rivalry persists in many areas (Jaffrelot, 2003).

D. Intra-OBC Competition and Tensions

Intra-OBC competition is another significant challenge, particularly between the Yadavs and other backward castes, including Koeris, Kushwahs, and Kurmis. The dominance of Yadavs in the political sphere, especially during the tenure of Lalu Prasad Yadav, led to resentment among other OBC groups who felt underrepresented.

The emergence of leaders like Nitish Kumar and Upendra Kushwaha can be seen as a response to this intra-OBC rivalry. These leaders have focused on mobilizing non-Yadav OBCs to create a political counterbalance to the Yadav-dominated RJD. Despite these efforts, competition for resources and political power continues to be a source of tension within the broader OBC category (Yadav, 2011).

E. Political Fragmentation

It is a key issue affecting the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities. Over the years, splits within these communities have led to the formation of multiple smaller parties, often centered around individual leaders. For example, the formation of the RLSP by Upendra Kushwaha after his split from the JD(U) illustrates how personal ambitions and intra-community rivalries can lead to political fragmentation. This fragmentation weakens the collective bargaining power of these communities, as their votes are divided among different parties. It also complicates alliance-building, as larger parties must negotiate with multiple smaller parties representing the same caste groups (Verma & Gupta, 2019).

This fragmentation has also led to frequent realignments in Bihar's coalition politics, with smaller parties switching alliances based on political expediency. As a result, while these communities remain significant in terms of their electoral strength, their political influence is often contingent on the larger coalitions they align with (Chandra, 2004).

VII. Impact on Bihar's Political System

A. Strengthening of Regional Parties

The political mobilization of Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities played a crucial role in the rise of regional parties like Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)] and Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP). These parties emerged as strong contenders against national parties, emphasizing regional issues and caste-based representation. Nitish Kumar's JD(U) capitalized on the socio-political aspirations of these communities by promoting a governance model focused on development and social justice.

The RLSP, founded by Upendra Kushwaha in 2013, further highlighted the political significance of Koeri and Kushwaha voters. While its influence was initially limited to specific regions, the RLSP's alliance with the BJP during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections underscored the growing importance of regional parties in Bihar's political landscape (Jha, 2017).

B. Decline of National Parties

The rise of regional parties led to the decline of national parties like the Congress and, to some extent, the BJP in Bihar. The Congress, once dominant in Bihar politics, gradually lost its foothold due to its inability to address the caste-based aspirations of backward communities. National parties struggled to compete with regional parties that were more attuned to local issues and caste dynamics.

While the BJP has regained some ground in recent years by forming strategic alliances with regional parties like JD(U) and RLSP, its success has largely been contingent on these coalitions. The dominance of regional parties reflects a broader trend of caste-based regional consolidation, where political power is increasingly decentralized and aligned with specific community interests (Chandra, 2004).

C. Policy Implications

The political prominence of the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities has significantly influenced policy-making in Bihar, particularly in the areas of agriculture, education, and social welfare. Given their strong involvement in agriculture, policies aimed at improving irrigation, access to credit, and market linkages have been prioritized by successive governments.

In the education sector, the demand for greater access to higher education and vocational training for backward castes has led to the establishment of new institutions and the expansion of reservation policies. Social welfare schemes, such as scholarships, housing programs, and health initiatives, have also been tailored to benefit these communities, reflecting their electoral significance (Verma & Gupta, 2019).

D. Impact on Governance

The increased political participation of backward castes has transformed governance in Bihar, particularly at the rural level. The empowerment of these communities through panchayati raj institutions has improved local governance and ensured better implementation of rural development programs.

Nitish Kumar's tenure as Chief Minister is often credited with strengthening rural infrastructure, improving law and order, and promoting transparency in governance. These initiatives were aimed at

addressing the socio-economic grievances of backward communities and consolidating their political support (Yadav, 2011).

E. Changing Political Dynamics

In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift from purely caste-based politics to a more issue-based political discourse. While caste remains an important factor in electoral mobilization, political parties have increasingly focused on governance, development, and welfare as key electoral planks.

This shift is attributed to changing voter expectations, particularly among the younger generation, who prioritize employment, education, and infrastructure over caste identity. Nitish Kumar's governance-centric approach, often termed as "development with justice," reflects this transformation in Bihar's political dynamics (Jaffrelot, 2003).

VIII. Future Prospects

A. Trends in Political Participation

The political participation of the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities is expected to remain significant in Bihar's electoral dynamics. As socioeconomic conditions evolve, these communities are likely to demand greater representation not only in legislative bodies but also in executive and bureaucratic roles. The increasing awareness among these groups, fueled by education and socio-political movements, suggests a shift toward more issue-based politics, focusing on development, employment, and social welfare rather than purely caste-based agendas (Jha, 2017).

Furthermore, the emergence of second-generation political leaders from these communities, who are more educated and globally aware, is expected to change the nature of political discourse. These leaders are likely to emphasize governance, digital inclusion, and economic development, reflecting broader aspirations beyond caste identity (Verma & Gupta, 2019).

B. Role of Youth and Social Media

The role of youth and social media in political mobilization is becoming increasingly prominent. The younger generation from the Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities is actively engaging in political discussions through digital platforms. Social media has provided a space for these communities to voice their concerns, share information, and organize political campaigns.

In addition, **digital literacy programs** and increasing smartphone penetration have enabled rural youth to participate in political processes more effectively. Political parties are leveraging social media to connect with younger voters, who are more inclined to vote based on issues such as education, employment, and governance rather than traditional caste loyalties (Chandra, 2004). Youth-led movements advocating for policy changes and transparency in governance are expected to play a pivotal role in shaping future political trends. As a result, the political landscape may witness a gradual transition from caste-centric mobilization to a more inclusive and development-oriented approach.

C. Policy Recommendations

1. Promoting Inclusive Education: The government should focus on enhancing the quality of education in backward regions, ensuring that children from marginalized communities have access to better schools, scholarships, and vocational training. This can help bridge socio-economic disparities and foster social mobility (Jaffrelot, 2003).

2. Economic Empowerment: Policies aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and small-scale industries among backward castes can significantly improve their economic status. Special financial assistance programs and skill development initiatives tailored for these communities can help reduce unemployment and dependency on agriculture.
3. Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions: Enhancing the capacity and autonomy of local governance structures can ensure better representation and participation of backward communities in decision-making processes. This can lead to more equitable resource distribution and development at the grassroots level (Yadav, 2011).
4. Cultural Integration Programs: Encouraging cultural integration through community-driven programs and events can help reduce caste-based prejudices and foster social harmony. Educational institutions and civil society organizations can play a key role in promoting inter-caste dialogue and collaboration.

D. Role of Government and Civil Society

1. Implementing Anti-Discrimination Laws: The government should ensure strict enforcement of anti-discrimination laws in workplaces, educational institutions, and public spaces. Mechanisms for reporting and addressing caste-based discrimination need to be strengthened to protect marginalized communities.
2. Promoting Political Representation: Encouraging greater political participation by providing reservations and leadership training for backward caste youth can help in building a more inclusive political environment. Initiatives aimed at mentoring young political leaders from marginalized backgrounds can foster diversity in political leadership (Verma & Gupta, 2019).
3. Civil Society Initiatives: Civil society organizations can play a crucial role in bridging gaps between different caste groups. Through advocacy, research, and grassroots mobilization, they can raise awareness about caste-based inequalities and push for policy reforms that promote social justice.
4. Monitoring and Evaluation of Policies: Regular monitoring and evaluation of government schemes aimed at backward castes can help in assessing their effectiveness and making necessary improvements. Transparency and accountability mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure that the intended beneficiaries receive the full benefits of these programs (Jha, 2017).

E. Current Political Situation- 2025 Perspective

As of January 2025, Bihar's political landscape is characterized by significant developments and strategic realignments in anticipation of the upcoming Legislative Assembly elections.

1. In January 2024, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, known for his strategic political maneuvers, realigned with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a move that reshaped Bihar's political scene.²⁴
2. The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), led by Tejashwi Yadav, has expressed willingness to welcome Nitish Kumar back into the Grand Alliance if he parts ways with the BJP.²⁵
3. The NDA has reaffirmed Nitish Kumar as its chief ministerial candidate for the 2025 elections, emphasizing his leadership and experience as central to their campaign.²⁶

²⁴ [Alliance with BJP](#)

²⁵ [RJD](#)

²⁶ [2025 Assembly Elections](#)

4. Mithila Statehood Demand²⁷: The movement for a separate Mithila state has gained momentum, with various organizations and political figures advocating for statehood. Protests and campaigns have been organized, and leaders like former Chief Minister Rabri Devi have expressed support for the cause, indicating its potential impact on regional politics.

IX. Conclusion

Despite the significant progress made by Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities in achieving political representation, there remains a pressing need to move beyond caste-based politics. While caste identity has historically been a critical factor in mobilizing marginalized communities and securing their rights, it has often led to political fragmentation and hindered the focus on broader developmental goals (Chandra, 2004).

The future of Bihar's politics should prioritize issue-based and development-driven agendas that address the core socio-economic challenges faced by all communities, regardless of caste. Policies aimed at improving education, healthcare, employment, and infrastructure must take center stage, ensuring equitable growth and social harmony. Leaders from Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi communities, as well as other caste groups, have a crucial role to play in fostering this shift. By emphasizing governance, transparency, and accountability, they can help build a political environment that transcends caste barriers and focuses on inclusive development.

In this context, the role of civil society, educational institutions, and media in raising awareness about the importance of issue-based politics cannot be overstated. Collaborative efforts between government and non-governmental actors can help create a more equitable and prosperous Bihar, where caste identities no longer dictate political affiliations or policy outcomes.

Ultimately, the evolution of Koeri, Kushwaha, and Kurmi politics from caste-centric mobilization to development-oriented participation holds the potential to transform Bihar's socio-political landscape, setting an example for other states grappling with similar challenges (Yadav, 2011).

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