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## Bhartiya Kisan union and agrarian mobilization in Western Uttar Pradesh's sugarcane belt

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### Abstract

The Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) has played a crucial role in shaping the agrarian mobilisation Western Uttar Pradesh's sugarcane belt, a region that has significant economic and political importance in India. Founded in 1986 by Mahendra Singh Tikait amidst growing agrarian distress, the BKU emerged as a powerful farmers' organisation and played an important role during the agrarian upsurge of the late 1980s. Since then, it has continued to act as a strong advocate for farmers' rights and agrarian interests. This paper analyses the influence of the BKU on agrarian mobilisation in the region, focusing on its impact on policy decisions, electoral outcomes, and the socio-economic conditions of the region. Through a detailed analysis of historical and contemporary events from secondary sources, the study explores the BKU's role in shaping agricultural policies, particularly regarding sugarcane pricing, subsidies, and payments, and its broader impact on farmers' livelihoods. Additionally, the paper investigates the how agrarian mobilization have swayed voting patterns and political alliances in the region. The findings reveal that the BKU has not only been successful in advocating for farmers' rights but has also become a key player in the political governance of Western Uttar Pradesh. Its influence has contributed to shaping the region's political landscape, making it an essential actor in any discussion about agrarian politics in India.

**Keywords:** Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU), agrarian politics, western Uttar Pradesh, sugarcane belt, electoral influence

### Introduction

The Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU), established in 1986 by Mahendra Singh Tikait, has played a crucial role in agrarian mobilisation in Western Uttar Pradesh. Recent farmers' protests of 2020-2021 against the three farm laws brought the BKU back into the national spotlight. These laws the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act were seen by farmers as a threat to the existing Minimum Support Price (MSP) system, sparking fears of corporate exploitation. The protests eventually culminated in the repeal of these laws in November 2021, highlighting the resilience and mobilizing power of the BKU, especially under the leadership of Rakesh Tikait, the son of Mahendra Singh Tikait.

Rakesh Tikait's leadership during the protests played a pivotal role in revitalizing the movement, especially after his emotional appeal in January 2021. His tears, broadcast on national television, struck a chord with the farming community and brought new momentum to the protests. The BKU, through its widespread network, was able to bring together farmers from various regions, particularly from Western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Punjab. This coalition of agrarian communities, cutting across caste and regional lines, gave the movement a unique strength. Thinkers like Yogendra Yadav have noted how the movement underscored the BKU's ability to build a pan-farmer identity, which transcended local issues to address broader concerns about the future of Indian agriculture.

A key issue that the BKU has consistently championed is the pricing of sugarcane. In Western Uttar Pradesh, sugarcane is the dominant crop, and the prices that farmers receive for their produce directly affect their livelihoods. The BKU has been at the forefront of demanding higher State-Advised Prices (SAP) for sugarcane, which ensures that farmers receive remunerative prices. In 2022, under pressure from the BKU and other farmer organizations, the Uttar Pradesh government raised the SAP to ₹350 per quintal.

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This price hike was a significant achievement for the BKU, given that the state accounts around 40% of India's total sugarcane production. The union's consistent pressure on the government to revise SAP and ensure timely payments from sugar mills has had a direct impact on policy decisions affecting the region's farmers.

In addition to pricing, the BKU has also focused on securing subsidies and financial support for farmers. The protests of 2020-21 highlighted these demands once again, as the union called for reduced electricity tariffs, subsidies on fertilizers and irrigation, and loan waivers. In 2017, the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh announced a farm loan waiver scheme, amounting to ₹36,000 crore, following earlier agitations by the BKU and other farmer organizations. This decision provided significant relief to indebted farmers. The movement also pushed the government to implement reduced electricity tariffs for agricultural users, another long-standing demand of the BKU. These achievements underscore the BKU's ability to influence state-level policy decisions through sustained advocacy and protest.

The political ramifications of the farmers' movement were visible in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, where the BJP's performance in the sugarcane belt showed noticeable cracks. The BKU, in alliance with the Rastriya Lok Dal (RLD), successfully mobilized voters in districts like Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Meerut, Baghpat and Shamli, traditionally dominated by agrarian concerns. The BJP, which had enjoyed strong support in these regions during the 2017 elections, saw its vote share drop by nearly 10% in several sugarcane-growing districts in 2022. The discontent among farmers over delayed payments from sugar mills, as well as grievances related to MSP, played a crucial role in shaping this electoral outcome. Scholars like Dipankar Gupta have long argued that agrarian distress in India is not just an economic issue but also a deeply political one, with movements like the BKU serving as intermediaries between farmers and the state.

The BKU's political strategy has historically been flexible, allowing the union to align with different political parties based on their stance on agrarian issues. While the BKU has often maintained a stance of neutrality, choosing to support candidates who champion farmers' rights, the 2020-21 protests marked a shift towards a more confrontational approach, particularly against the BJP. The union's opposition to the farm laws and its vocal criticism of the central government's policies have reshaped the political landscape in Western Uttar Pradesh. As we can see 2024 general elections result, the BKU's influence had remained a critical factor, especially in the sugarcane belt, where farmers' votes determine electoral outcomes.

The farmers' movement against the three farm laws demonstrated the enduring relevance of the BKU in Indian politics. By successfully mobilizing farmers and influencing key policy decisions, the union has shown that it remains a formidable force in the political governance of Western Uttar Pradesh. The 2022 and 2024 elections are witnessing the continued influence of the BKU, as agrarian issues, particularly those related to sugarcane pricing, subsidies, and payments, continue to dominate the political discourse in the region. The BKU's ability to navigate the complex intersections of agrarian distress, policy advocacy, and electoral politics ensures that it will remain an essential

actor in shaping the future of Western Uttar Pradesh's political landscape.

This paper aims to critically analyse the political influence of the BKU in Western Uttar Pradesh's sugarcane belt. It will explore how the union has shaped agricultural policies related to sugarcane pricing, subsidies, and payments, and how these policies have impacted the livelihoods of farmers. Additionally, the paper will assess the BKU's electoral influence, examining how its mobilization efforts have shaped voting patterns and political alliances in the region. By drawing on historical events, contemporary political developments, and socio-economic data, this study will demonstrate that the BKU has not only been successful in advocating for farmers' rights but has also played a central role in shaping the political governance of Western Uttar Pradesh.

In doing so, the paper will contribute to the broader understanding of agrarian politics in India, illustrating how movements like the BKU are essential actors in the political landscape, particularly in regions where agriculture remains the cornerstone of the economy and society.

### **Chaudhary Charan Singh: Pioneering the 'Kisan' Identity in Indian Politics**

Over the period of time, the Jats have possessed a large amount of land in western Uttar Pradesh. The Jats were owners who worked directly in all parts of agriculture (Stokes, 1978). However, they also persecuted Dalits and other lower-caste labourers, notably in Upper Doab, a rich area located between the Ganga and Yamuna rivers. The development of canal irrigation, along with the beginning of the Green Revolution, considerably improved the Jats' position. Beginning in the 1960s, Chaudhari Charan Singh mobilised the Jats and other middle castes by highlighting their common identity as kisan (farmers). His motives stemmed from his origins as a farmer in a rural community. Charan Singh saw farmers' problems, moneylenders' exploitative methods, and metropolitan political officials' disdainful views towards farmers and rural populations. He saw and understood how intermediate castes were marginalised in national politics, particularly in the context of being a farmer.

Charan Singh began his political career with the Congress party, but left in 1967, disillusioned with the Nehruvian strategy to development, which promoted large industry. Charan Singh, inspired by Gandhi, continually valued agriculture and promoted cottage industries, village businesses, small-scale manufacturing, and artisanal craftsmanship. He worked tirelessly to develop Indian agriculture and farmers' welfare, with the goal of empowering rural communities to become self-sufficient. He stressed the necessity of rural economic growth based on agricultural prosperity rather than large-scale industry. He created the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) in 1967, followed by the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD) in 1974 (Brass, 1993) <sup>[3]</sup>. These associations fought for land reforms that predominantly benefitted middle agricultural castes like as Jats, Gujjars, Ahirs, and Kurmis, while ignoring the concerns of Dalits and other landless castes. The agrarian-oriented parties, the BKD and BLD, called for more state investment in agriculture, with the goal of improving the welfare of peasant owners and stimulating small-scale companies to provide jobs for workers. During his two brief

stints as Uttar Pradesh's chief minister (in 1967 and 1970), he implemented a number of policies aimed at benefiting farmers, such as irrigation and electricity input subsidies, cementing his position as a prominent leader among the landowning middle castes known as 'kisan.'

His notion that the kisan constituted a homogenous category within the rural environment, free of internal caste and class divides, aided in the development of his 'Bharat against India' philosophy. Charan Singh, motivated by his agrarian philosophy, had a considerable impact on the restructuring of Uttar Pradesh's political economy of agriculture by developing and implementing several legislative measures for agricultural reform both before and after independence. During his 24-week time as Prime Minister from 1979 to 1980, he continuously and passionately articulated the concerns of big and medium-sized farmers until he was defeated by the Congress party in a mid-term poll. As a result, his political career and the mobilisation of farmers under his leadership dwindled gradually. As a consequence, his party was unable to get any concessions from the Congress administration on the issue of rising farm prices. At this moment, the BKU had filled the developing political hole in the farmers' political scene.

### **The Bharatiya Kisan Union and Agrarian Mobilisation**

Established in 1978, the BKU (Indian Farmers' Union) provided a platform for big and medium-scale farmers of diverse castes and faiths. It included both Hindu and Muslim Jats, although it was consolidated under the title of 'kisan.' The BKU, led by Hindu Jat farmer Mahendra Singh Tikait (referred to as MS hereafter), organised a series of protest rallies in the 1980s to advocate for lower electricity costs and higher agricultural prices. In January 1988, a large number of farmers held a three-week-long protest outside the District Commissioner's office in Meerut town. Their demands included the abolition of electricity and water costs, the cancellation of debts, and a rise in sugar cane prices. The Meerut protest was followed by a historic rally at the Boat Club in Delhi in October of that year, during which hundreds of thousands of farmers, accompanied by tractors and trolleys, besieged the lawns of the Boat Club adjacent to Parliament, effectively immobilising the city centre for more than a week. The demonstrations had widespread support from many socioeconomic classes, castes, and religious organisations. The BKU resonated well in rural Western Uttar Pradesh, capturing the interest of large sectors of the rural population.

The BKU began its journey as a group representing the Baliyan Jats. It began as an informal and loosely coordinated mass movement made up of Jat farmers from Uttar Pradesh's western area (Sahay, 2004) <sup>[12]</sup>. MS called a panchayat for his farmer clan in Sisauli in October 1986, and hundreds of Baliyan Jat farmers attended (Rana, 1994) <sup>[11]</sup>. Recognising the potential of collective action, the farmers of Baliyan within the panchayat decided to form an agricultural group known as the BKU, and nominated MS to lead the campaign. MS, the head of the Baliyan clan and khap, ran the union in a casual way reminiscent of a family structure, taking influence from the ancient sarva khap panchayat. The BKU received support from both Hindu and Muslim farmers, reflecting the local social and geographical dynamics. The BKU has significant Jat support in the districts of Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Baghpat, Bijnor, Bulandshahr, and Noida, as well as strong Gujjar and

Rajput followings. The three stated are also the dominant castes in the area. The Jats and Gujjars are affiliated with three different religious groups: Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. Hindu Jats, Muley Jats, and Sikh Jats coexist with Hindu Gujjars, Muley Gujjars, and Sikh Gujjars. Rajputs may be classified as either Hindu or Muslim. Although Muley Jats, Muley Gujjars, and Muley Rajputs are numerous, Sikh Jats make up a minor proportion of the rural western Uttar Pradesh population. The Jats, Gujjars, and Rajputs hold the majority of the region's land.

There are several societal and economic commonalities between Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh Jat farmers. The condition is similar among Gujjars from Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh roots. This idea applies equally to both Hindu Rajputs and Muslim Rajputs. MS used the common traits of these clans to strengthen agricultural politics by forging the Ahir, Jat, Gujjar, and Rajput (AJGR) alliance amid the changing agrarian environment of the 1980s. The BKU achieved its apex in the late 1980s. By portraying the BKU as a non-political body, it was able to participate in larger farmer mobilisation efforts that reached beyond the local setting. The BKU collaborated and formed alliances with Shetkari Sanghatana in Maharashtra, Bharatiya Kisan Sangh in Gujarat, Tamilnādu Agriculturalists' Association in Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha in Karnataka. Indeed, the farmers' movements had a substantial effect on local, regional, and national politics in India throughout the 1980s.

Farmers' political power has declined during the 1990s, owing to two connected developments: the adoption of neoliberal reforms and the rise of caste-based and communal political organisations. The adoption of neoliberal reforms aggravated the current agricultural crisis by reducing farm subsidies, while the dynamics of community politics reduced the relevance of farmer-centric political participation. The decline in political coordination among farmers since the 1990s can be traced back to the diversification of Uttar Pradesh's electoral landscape, which saw the rise of the Samajwadi Party (SP), the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The SP and BSP's communal initiatives create a climate that supports the BJP's communal methods. In the next part, we'll look at how BKU influences policy choices.

### **Policy Implications**

One of the most critical policy areas where the BKU has had a profound impact is the pricing of sugarcane. The sugarcane belt of Western Uttar Pradesh, which contributes around 17% of India's total sugarcane production, has been a vital component of the region's economy. The income of farmers is directly linked to the State-Advised Price (SAP) for sugarcane, which is fixed by the state government each year. However, sugarcane farmers have long faced issues related to underpricing and delayed payments by sugar mills.

From the late 1980s onwards, the BKU emerged as a formidable force advocating for higher SAPs. One of the union's earliest victories came in the late 1980s when Mahendra Singh Tikait led a series of protests, most notably the 1988 Meerut rally, where farmers gathered in large numbers to demand better prices for their produce. This rally was a turning point in sugarcane politics, as it forced the state government to take action. As historian D. N.



Dhanagare noted, the BKU succeeded in creating a sense of collective identity among farmers across caste and regional lines, thus strengthening their bargaining power.

Due to the persistent pressure exerted by the BKU, the Uttar Pradesh government increased SAPs multiple times during the late 1980s and early 1990s. For instance, the SAP for sugarcane, which stood at Rs. 24 per quintal in 1980, saw a steady increase, reaching Rs. 45 per quintal by the mid-1990s, thanks to the union's lobbying efforts. This pricing increase was critical to improving the economic condition of sugarcane farmers, who had long been struggling with low incomes.

In the 2000s, the BKU continued to play a critical role in ensuring that the SAP kept pace with inflation and rising input costs. The SAP for sugarcane in Uttar Pradesh saw a sharp rise between 2005 and 2015, largely due to the union's demands. In 2011-12, the SAP for sugarcane reached Rs. 250 per quintal, representing a considerable jump from previous years. The union's influence was once again visible during the 2017 elections when farmers' distress became a focal issue. In response to this, the BJP government, which won a significant mandate, raised the SAP to Rs. 325 per quintal in 2017. The decision came on the heels of BKU's protests demanding fair compensation for rising input costs and the delayed payments by mills.

Despite these successes, challenges persist. In recent years, sugar mills have often delayed payments to farmers, leading to increasing farmer debt. According to the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), by the end of 2021, the outstanding dues owed to farmers in Uttar Pradesh alone were close to Rs. 12,000 crore. The BKU has continued to pressure both the state and central governments to enforce timely payments, pushing for legislative changes that would penalize mills for delays.

### **The 2020-21 farmers' protests and sugarcane pricing**

The 2020-21 farmers' protests in India, sparked by the introduction of three contentious farm laws, marked a pivotal moment in the nation's agrarian movements. The BKU (Bharatiya Kisan Union), under the leadership of Rakesh Tikait, played a critical role in mobilizing farmers against these laws, which aimed to deregulate agricultural markets, allow contract farming, and amend the Essential Commodities Act. While the protests were largely focused on wheat and rice producers from Punjab and Haryana, sugarcane farmers from Uttar Pradesh were also heavily involved due to concerns about broader agrarian policies, including sugarcane pricing.

One of the underlying issues for sugarcane farmers was the fear that deregulation would eventually undermine the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and state-advised prices for key crops, particularly sugarcane. This led to a massive outpouring of discontent, as sugarcane farmers in western Uttar Pradesh joined the protests, seeing the laws as a potential threat to their livelihoods. The BKU organized numerous rallies, roadblocks, and sit-ins across the region, contributing to the nationwide movement that kept pressure on the government.

The protests culminated in the government's decision to repeal the farm laws in November 2021, a major victory for the farmers' unions, including the BKU. The protests also emphasized the role of sugarcane pricing as a persistent agrarian issue, as farmers demanded better payment rates from sugar mills and timely disbursement of dues. The

repeal of the farm laws did not directly address sugarcane pricing but demonstrated the influence of farmer unions like the BKU in shaping agricultural policy.

The political impact of the 2020-21 farmers' protests on the 2024 elections is evident, as these protests have undoubtedly reinforced the BKU's status as a key advocate for farmers' rights, particularly in the sugarcane belt of Uttar Pradesh.

## **Agrarian Mobilisation and Electoral Dynamics**

### **1989 Elections and the fall of congress**

The 1989 general elections in India marked a significant turning point in the country's political landscape, particularly due to the influence of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU). Led by Mahendra Singh Tikait, the BKU mobilized farmers across western Uttar Pradesh and other northern regions, rallying against Congress's failure to address key agrarian issues such as low crop prices, delayed payments from sugar mills, and inadequate government support for farmers. This mobilization led to a shift in the political dynamics, with farmers increasingly supporting opposition parties.

In Uttar Pradesh, a state that had historically been a Congress stronghold, the impact of the BKU's efforts was unmistakable. The Congress party, which had won 83 seats in Uttar Pradesh during the 1984 elections, suffered a dramatic fall, securing only 15 seats in 1989. This significant loss was mirrored across the nation, as the Congress party's seat count dropped from 414 in 1984 to just 197 in 1989. The Janata Dal, which capitalized on the discontent among farmers and aligned with the BKU's demands, made substantial gains, winning 54 seats in Uttar Pradesh and 143 seats nationwide, forming the next government.

The BKU's influence in the 1989 elections was not limited to Uttar Pradesh. Its ability to unite farmers, transcending caste and religious divisions, played a crucial role in galvanizing support for opposition parties, particularly in rural areas. The Congress party's inability to address agrarian distress and growing rural discontent contributed significantly to its downfall, while regional parties like Janata Dal emerged as champions of the rural populace. The 1989 elections thus marked the decline of Congress in rural India and the rise of farmer-backed and regional political forces that would continue to shape Indian politics for years to come.

### **Evidence from 2022 Assembly and 2024 Lok Sabha Polls**

The activism of farmers, particularly after January 27, 2021, raised awareness of the rising communalism that erupted in the aftermath of the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots. The moving footage of a sobbing Rakesh Tikait on social media served as a major spark for the uprising, with his remarks reverberating across a large audience. Farmers of Hindu and Muslim descent who had previously partnered with the BKU felt humiliated. Rakesh's plea not only energised the farmers at the protest locations, but also rallied a varied coalition of Hindu and Muslim farmers, as well as young and elderly people from around the area. Young Jat males, both Hindu and Muslim, who had previously lived and worked in the National Capital Region (NCR), assembled in large numbers at the Ghazipur border to show their support for the farmers' movement and BKU leader Rakesh Tikait. The BKU leadership took this chance to revitalise its grassroots organisation by organising kisan mahapanchayats

throughout the area. The BKU attempted to reconnect with its former members, particularly Muslim farmers who had distanced themselves during the Muzaffarnagar riots.

Civil society groups, such as Paigham-e-Insaniyat, a non-governmental organisation, and informal collectives founded by Bipin Baliyan, have worked relentlessly to bring Jat and Muslim farmers and labourers together on a single platform. The farmers' movement provided an important opportunity to link the two groups. At the same time, the BKU began the process of reforming village-level committees and revitalising its cadre throughout the area, particularly in the sugar cane belt, which includes Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Baghpat, and Meerut. The BKU's leadership and activists held meetings at the village and mohalla levels, relying on shared ancestry, the tradition of Chaudhary Charan Singh and Baba Tikait (MS Tikait), and the similar sociocultural customs that Hindu and Muley Jat farmers share. A committee at the village level includes Hindu and Muley Jat farmers, as well as Jatav labourers. For example, the BKU leadership and activists used the phrase 'Jai Bhim, Jai Ram' while simultaneously reviving their ancient chant 'Allahu Akbar'. The BKU's leadership emphasised that attaining victory in the battle requires cross-caste coalitions and the symbolic recognition of Dalits as equals. This resulted in support from the Dalit 'Bhim Army' at a critical point when the BJP government wanted to remove farmers from the Ghazipur border.

A similar structure was developed in Gujjar and Rajput-dominated villages, with young Dalits included into village-level committees. The blue banner of the Bhim Army, together with that of the Ambedkarites, was hoisted next to the BKU flag, symbolising worker and farmer unity. The participation and promotion of educated young females on committees reflects a remarkable change in BKU leadership, which has previously been dominated by middle-aged and older men. Well-informed young Jats worked relentlessly to assure a steady supply. The village committees collected donations of Rs.100 and Rs.50 from each agricultural home. Workers were asked to give a little sum to show their sympathy with the BKU. In addition to monetary gifts, individual farmers and business people from different castes donated milk, rice, wheat flour, mustard oil, and fresh vegetables. A number of significant agricultural producers sponsored a daily dinner and provided the required supplies. Every day, village committees organised the collecting and delivery of needed products, including food, to the Ghazipur border. The constant encounters between Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, landless workers, and women within the village and Mohalla frameworks encouraged trust and led to the formation of new alliances that crossed caste, class, gender, and religious lines. The farmers' movement of 2020-2021 successfully put an end to the communal divisiveness promoted by the BJP after the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots.

In the process of collecting critical supplies, food, and finances for distribution at the Ghazipur border, social media proved to be a great tool for team coordination and transportation facilitation. In summary, social media played a crucial role in the mobilisation, protest actions, organising, and distribution of information during the 2020-2021 farmers' movement. Emerging agriculturalists have used social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and TikTok to link farmers, bridge communication gaps with village leaders, and extend to block and district-level authorities. This arose as a vital and quick means of linking

distant settlements. Farmers in the villages of western Uttar Pradesh received frequent briefings on the demonstrations, including the agricultural leaders' requests and strategy. Simultaneously, social media increased communication between the farmers' movement and the worldwide scattered Jat diaspora. The young farmers effectively gathered a wide range of worldwide financial, political, and spiritual support by disseminating messages and pleas via Jatland.com, an online forum for the international Jat community, and WhatsApp. This includes endorsements from renowned personalities, like Rihanna and Greta Thunberg, who tweeted their support. As a result, the farmers' movement encouraged ties not just within social circles but also beyond geographical boundaries on a worldwide scale. The deliberate and purposeful use of social media has demolished the notion of farmers as isolated, perplexing those sectors of the state and urban elites who had previously branded farmers as uneducated and 'primitive'.

The establishment of these solidarities strengthened civil society institutions while also influencing electoral politics and the results of the 2022 UP legislative assembly elections and 2024 General Elections. The BJP suffered a big loss in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli, two areas severely touched by the sectarian violence in 2013. In Muzaffarnagar, the BJP won just one of the six seats, with a significant loss in five others, particularly in rural regions. In Shamli, the BJP was completely defeated, losing all three seats. In Meerut, it won just two of the seven available seats. The significance of this issue cannot be emphasised, since the farmers' movement was primarily concentrated on the sugarcane belt, notably Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Baghpat, and Meerut. These districts represent a total of nineteen seats. The BJP won just six of the nineteen contested seats. Notably, three of these victories Meerut South, Meerut Cantonment, and Muzaffarnagar are mostly urban seats with little impact from the farmers' movement.

Prominent BJP figures, including Thakur Sangeet Singh Som (contesting from Sardhana in Meerut), Suresh Rana (from Thana Bhawan in Shamli), Umesh Malik (from Budhana in Muzaffarnagar), and Mriganka Singh (daughter of the late Babu Hukum Singh, who ran from Kairana in Shamli), all suffered significant defeats, losing by margins of more than 10,000 votes. In some seats, notably Baraut in Baghpat district, Hastinapur in Meerut, and Khatauli in Muzaffarnagar, the BJP defeated the RLD by margins of 300, 445, and 500 votes. Tejbeer (56), a BKU activist and the sarpanch of Nangala village in Muzaffarnagar, stated, "In the 2017 UP legislative elections, all the Jats from our and neighbouring villages voted for the BJP, whereas in the 2022 election, at least 50%-60% of the Jat population opted for either the RLD or SP." This marks a huge progress in the political scene. A sizable number of Jat voters have rejoined their agrarian party, the RLD. As a result, the farmers' movement revived the RLD, giving fresh life and vitality to a political party on the verge of extinction.

Ultimately, the opposition parties in Uttar Pradesh, especially the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party, had been mainly dormant for five years, failing to discharge their obligations as a check on the governing party. Akhilesh Yadav, the SP's leader, was noticeably missing from public view, even throughout the farmers' protest. Over the last five years, he has predominantly used social media channels, notably Twitter, to manage his political activities. Throughout the COVID-19 epidemic,

when thousands UP workers travelled hundreds of km to return to their towns, the SP and its leadership were conspicuously absent. It is especially concerning because, despite the presence of thousands of dead floating on the Ganges, Yadav and his party's leadership seemed to be missing from any significant relief efforts aimed at the impacted population. Despite their lack of aggressive steps, the SP won 112 seats, increasing their vote share by around 10%. This clearly demonstrates how the farmers' movement sparked a revolution in rural politics by strengthening the opposition and political parties that had previously lost their mandates. Currently, there is a strong resistance, developed by the farmers' movement. Additionally, the BJP suffered a loss of five out of ten seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha election in the sugarcane belt of Western Uttar Pradesh.

Furthermore, the farmers' movement raised awareness of the agricultural community's issues and frustrations. The BJP administration in Uttar Pradesh has openly stated its commitment to address the problem of wandering cattle that destroy agricultural crops. Furthermore, the BJP government hiked sugar cane prices after almost five years. The government persevered in its attempts to provide supplementary goods, such as rice, wheat, vegetable oil, and salt, to economically challenged households throughout the state.

Notably, the farmers' movement of 2020-2021 helped to heal communal rifts and fostered unity within a divided western Uttar Pradesh society by bringing together large, small, marginal, and landless farmers, as well as youth, on a single platform to advance farmers' interests. Arguably, this is one of the movement's most important triumphs. Furthermore, the changing identity of farmers has altered political dynamics and challenged the BJP's stronghold in the western UP area during the 2022 legislative elections. Furthermore, it increased the BKU leadership's willingness to connect with Dalit labourers who had previously distanced themselves from both the Jats and the BKU in the 1980s and 1990s.

In addition, there are fault lines. The BKU has failed to form coalitions with new farmers from the most marginalised castes, such as Sainis, Moryas, and Gadarias, who have stayed outside the kisan identity promoted by Charan Singh and MS Tikait. Neither the BKU nor the RLD attempted to interact with those outside of the dominant castes. This is a crucial component in understanding why the RLD was unable to fully capitalise on the benefits provided by the farmer movement. Agriculturalists from the most marginalised castes have risen to become a prominent political force in the region. The RLD has passed up this chance. Furthermore, by presenting Sainis, Moryas, and Gadarias as downtrodden by the predominance of landowning farmers, the BJP has skilfully converted them into new Hindutva supporters. Furthermore, the Jats have lost the political cohesiveness that defined their collective identity throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The budding political competition among the Jats, pushed by the aspirational middle class, has produced new characters such as Sanjeev Balyan, creating a schism that the BJP's political strategy may exploit.

The resurgence of a kisan identity that transcends Hindu-Muslim divisions is a commendable step forward; however, the long-term viability of such alliances remains uncertain, particularly in the current environment, where the Hindutva faction fuels daily unrest through the manipulation of false

memories and contrived 'historical' narratives of Hindu victimhood. The creation of kisan identity ignores questions of class and gender fairness. Neither the agricultural community's leaders nor the sector's mobilisation activities assist the transfer of land ownership to women farmers or land redistribution. In the contemporary terrain, marked by a growing authoritarian Hindutva rule, farmer unity appears as a beacon of hope. The farmers' movement has created a new rural political environment, marked by a broad alliance fighting corporate capital and Hindutva. The program has provided a chance to reconsider and modify the conceptions of rural life and agriculture. It never ceases to inspire people to work for social and environmental justice. The comeback of grassroots secularism in western Uttar Pradesh, which is reducing Muslim fear, is one of the most important benefits of the farmers' movement in northern India.

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