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## **Agricultural Innovation and Political Change in North India: The Lok Dal In Uttar Pradesh**

IAN DUNCAN \*

This article examines the basis of the success of the Lok Dal in electoral politics in Uttar Pradesh in relation to a wide range of indicators of agricultural innovation and change. It argues that the Lok Dal, through its political practice and electoral strategy, was able to create and sustain an electoral following across the state which subsumed many potentially divisive identities and interests and that the party is better understood as one which created and articulated new aspirations and interests rather than one simply mobilizing traditional identities. It goes on to examine how events after the mid-1980s produced circumstances which inhibited the further consolidation of the Lok Dal and led to major changes in the party political system in Uttar Pradesh.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades politics in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) have been transformed by the emergence and consolidation of political parties and social movements rooted in the prosperous sections of the peasantry, or farmers as they have increasingly come to be known. Events in UP, India's largest and most electorally important state have supported strongly the assertion of Varshney [1993:209] that in predominantly rural societies democratic politics is likely to 'ruralize' both the political system and economic policy.

However, as he also points out, farmers have 'multiple selves' and their refusal to give permanent precedence to their economic interests over their ascriptive and other identities limits and complicates the construction of political coalitions unambiguously pursuing a rural agenda [Varshney, 1993: 210]. The importance of caste identities and their role in political and electoral mobilization has long been recognized as a crucial element in the success of peasant and farmer movements in UP (see, for example, Brass [1981]; Duncan [1988] for discussions on the role of caste identity in the political mobilization of peasants in particular localities in UP). More recently the rise of Hindu nationalism and the Hindutva movement have been seen as powerful forces

fracturing peasant solidarities and effective activism. Hindu and Muslim identities have sharpened in recent years and as these identities polarize and dominate the political sphere .... 'They can obstruct a sectoral or even populist construction of rural interests' [Hasan, 1994a: 188; Hasan, 1994b]. A similar process can be seen at work in the acceptance and partial implementation of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission Report which has provided a new focus for the aspirations of the Backward Classes whilst at the same time producing fissures in the rural sector between erstwhile allies who would benefit from its provisions and those who would not. It is also the case that, in an era when the mantra of globalization is heard everywhere, regional identity, and even parochial loyalties, can still exert a powerful influence over the construction of politically relevant identities.

In India such identities exert a particularly strong influence at the local level of the village, or even State Assembly constituency, where the fortunes of political movements and electoral efforts are often determined by local coalitions of interest or identity. No account, for example, of the success of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) in its efforts to mobilize the farmers of western UP would be complete without an understanding of its relationship to the traditional local kinship organization of the Jats in the region [Gupta, 1988; Hasan, 1989c; Singh, 1993; Lindberg, 1994]. Some of the observers of this movement have also drawn attention to the strong themes of regional identity in the political practice of the BKU leading one to focus on the 'hyper-localism' of the organization's strategy [Gupta, 1988: 2695]. The ways in which such local identities and forms of organization are articulated with wider constructions of social and economic collectivities is a key variable here and the substance of the political practice of movements and parties which seek to mobilize on the basis of such articulations will often be crucial in their success. Again the Jats of western UP and their relationship with the Bhartiya Kranti Dal (BKD) of Charan Singh in the late 1960s provide an interesting example of this articulation. A crucial factor in the success of the BKD was its ability to adapt to the local electoral environment, notwithstanding its very specific wider appeal to more prosperous peasants and farmers expressed through its leadership, ideology and party programme. Central to this was the ability of the party leadership and organization to merge the identity of the Jats with a greater collectivity of the more prosperous peasantry and '... the more they could blur the distinction between Jats as a caste and Jats as typical representatives of the more prosperous peasantry as a whole, the greater was the potential support for the party' [Duncan, 1988: 73] (also see Gould [1986: 640-41] for a discussion of this issue in the context of the 1984 General Election).

There is general agreement that the formation throughout UP of a stratum of prosperous peasants and farmers has been a decisive force behind the crystallisation of a distinctive rural political movement. Central to this development was the introduction and spread of innovations in agricultural practices after the 1960s and the adoption of these innovations by the more prosperous cultivators. Participation in the New Agricultural Strategy (NAS) resulted in peasants developing a sharpened interest in questions of access to the necessary inputs, such as improved seeds, fertilizer, farm machinery, irrigation facilities and energy sources, the terms, including those of credit arrangements, and prices at which such input could be obtained and the price at which agricultural products could be sold. As so many of these issues were determined by government and its local agencies, it is not surprising that the politicization of participants in the NAS followed swiftly on the heels of its introduction. Agricultural producers sought to maximise their position in the market and take advantage of the dependence of the government of them for providing the supply of an increasing proportion of the marketed of agricultural produce, particularly foodgrains, which was being procured by state agencies in areas where the NAS had taken hold. The prices of the commodities being used by peasants and farmers as inputs and the prices of the commodities being produced by them were largely state administered prices and the market thus became politicized [Lindberg, 1994: 105]. Many early studies of the relationship between the spread of new agricultural practices and the emergence of peasant movements stressed the connection between support for the 'new peasant parties' and concern for the terms under which participation in agricultural innovation was possible [Frankel, 1975].

The main purpose of this article is to investigate the extent to which the incidence of improved agricultural practices in UP was associated with support for the party which came to articulate the rural interest most clearly, the Lok Dal, and the circumstances under which this party was able to construct a distinctive political and electoral identity. Whilst many studies have pointed to the association of Lok Dal electoral support in UP with prosperous peasants and farmers, few have presented or analysed the evidence in a systematic way. Brass [1980a; 1980b] certainly broke valuable new ground with his work on political parties and sectional agrarian interests but he was primarily concerned with the influence of size of landholdings on party political and electoral preferences. Apart from some attention to the differential behavior of wheat and rice growing regions of UP his study did not directly address issues of the political consequences of participation in agricultural innovation.

Contemporary studies of the UP farmers' movement, such as those contained in the recent special volume of *The Journal of Peasant Studies* (Vol.21, Nos.3/4, April/July 1994), also point to the association between beneficiaries of the NAS and support. For example, whilst Hasan [1994a] shows, and properly emphasizes, the significance for the farmers' movement of the growing prosperity deriving from improved agricultural practices in the western districts of UP, she makes little reference to those data relating to agricultural performance in other parts of the state. Studies of the BKU, the major contemporary organizational expression of the farmers' movement in Western UP, have also tended to focus on the specific features of this region and offered few insights into the state of farmer politics and the relationship to agricultural innovation in the state as a whole [Gupta, 1998; Hasan, 1989c; Singh, 1993; Lindberg, 1994. Nor do we have any comprehensive account of the electoral performance of the Lok Dal in the time between the period covered by the Brass studies [1980a; 1980b] and its decline after the UP state elections of 1985.

It is particularly worth noting that few studies have attempted to make systematic use of the rich sources of information relating to agricultural innovation and performance at the district level which are available in the *Statistical Abstracts of Uttar Pradesh* or the work done on the comparative analysis of district level agricultural performance data [Bhalla and Alagh, 1979; Bhalla and Tyagi, 1989; Dev, 1985; Sharma and Poleman, 1994; Singh, 1990]. Despite some shortcomings, these sources on district level agricultural performance can yield useful results and raise questions for further enquiry. It is hoped that some of the gaps mentioned here will be filled by this study which will focus on the district level electoral performance of the Lok Dal between 1975 and 1985, its relationship to agricultural change and in addition will take up some of the themes discussed earlier about the circumstances in which economic interests and other identities interact.

## II. FROM BHARATIYA KRANTI DAL TO LOK DAL

Any analysis of peasant and farmer politics in UP over the last three decades has to start with a consideration of the role of Charan Singh and although his life and influence on the peasant movement in northern India have been closely studied (see Brass [1984]; Brass [1933b] and Byres [1988] for example), it is necessary to touch briefly on some aspects of his political involvement. Charan Singh started his political career in the Congress Party and from the late 1930s to the mid-1960s carved out a distinctive agenda which gave priority to the agrarian interest. In reality his position was not so much that of

a champion of the rural sector as a whole but rather one of defending and promoting the interests of the landowning sector and in particular the more prosperous sections of it; the position of the rural poor and the landless received little attention in his writings or in the political campaigns he led [ *Singh, 1947; Singh, 1958; Singh, 1959; Singh, 1964; Singh, 1978; Singh, 1981; BKD, 1968; BKD, 1971*].

By the time he broke with Congress, in 1967, and later formed a separate political party, the BKD, he had established a distinctive platform from which to launch an independent career. His early concern with issues of land reform, agricultural marketing and levels of land revenue remained and was now supplemented by attention to, and campaigning on, the questions which were becoming of growing importance to those peasants participation at an increasing rate in the new agricultural technology. Whilst the programme of Charan Singh was not markedly different in many respects from that of the Congress, he distinguished himself from the ruling party by his unambiguous support for the more prosperous peasants and farmers against urban interests and by his concentration on a stratum of peasants, never defined with precision, but certainly not including poor or marginal landowners with less than 2.5 acres [BKD, 1968; 9], the extent to which the support for the BKD was also dependent upon the allegiance of his own caste group, the Jats, should not be underestimated. In the 1969 UP state election the BKD won 98 seats of which nearly a third were won in just six districts, all in the western region, where Jats constitute around ten percent or more of the population.

It was partly in response to this narrowly circumscribed basis of support that Charan Singh negotiated a merger with the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) in time to contest the 1974 elections in the state. The support for the SSP was particularly strong in some districts in eastern UP, where it had a strong base amongst the so-called backward classes, particularly the Yadav's, and as a consequence the newly merged party, now called the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), enjoyed much more widespread electoral success in the 1974 election although its overall performance was much the same as in 1969. The BLD now sought to represent a coalition of two numerically strong but geographically distinct caste groups as well as the interests of prosperous peasants and farmers across the state as a whole, but it should be emphasized that the level of agricultural development and prosperity in the eastern districts was lower than that in the west of the state. The distinctive feature of the political practice of the BKD, and later the Lok Dal, was that it was able to build and electoral identity which subsumed not only caste differences but the differential levels of agricultural prosperity in the west and east as well.

After the period of the Emergency the BLD formed part of the Janata alliance and contested the 1977 elections in UP as part of the Janata coalition. Charan Singh was now more concerned with events in national politics but he consolidated further his position as a leader of peasants and farmers by his ability to orchestrate large demonstrations of rural supporters to bolster his position in factional struggles at the centre and by his period as Minister of Finance during which he introduced the so-called 'Kulak Budget' of 1979 [Byres, 1988: 162-3]. It was not surprising then that once he took the decision to form a separate party to contest elections in 1980 he again found widespread support in UP.

### III. ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE OF THE LOK DAL 1974-85

The first point to note about the electoral performance in UP of the Lok Dal and its progenitor party organizations in legislative assembly elections in 1974, 1980 and 1985 is the overall consistency of the popular vote for the party at around 21 percent of the total vote (21.2 percent in 1974, 21.5 percent in 1980 and 21.3 in 1985). However, the state wide data obscure wide variations in the fortunes of the party over the period under study in different parts of the state and conceal the degree to which the Lok Dal relied upon winning different seats in the three elections to secure its representation in the assembly. Of the 106 constituencies won in 1974 only 23 were successfully recontested in 1980 when the party won in a total of 84 assembly constituencies. In Varanasi district for example, of the nine assembly constituencies won in 1974 none was in the hands of the Lok Dal by 1980. In the 1985 election only 22 of the total 84 constituencies won by the Lok Dal were successful defences of seats won in 1980.

Over the three elections considered here the Lok Dal won only 12 constituencies on all occasion. Variations of this kind and in particular unpopularity of the incumbent party and/or candidate are not unusual features of Indian electoral politics and often reflect the shifting terrain of local micro-alliances and changes of candidates. One assembly seat in Hardoi district, for example, showed almost no evidence of electoral support for the Lok Dal before 1985 yet was won in that year by the party with over 50 percent of the vote by the previous incumbent who had defected from the BJP. In the three elections considered here it was the only seat ever won by the Lok Dal in that district.

As one of the purposes of this study is to establish general patterns of support for the Lok Dal which persisted over time and to investigate the extent to which these were associated with evidence of agricultural innovation. The

district, rather than the individual assembly constituency, has been chosen here as the unit of study. This has the added advantage that this is also the level at which most of the available agricultural performance data are collected.

For the purposes of this study the districts of UP have been grouped according to the strength of support for the Lok Dal in the three elections under study. Districts showing the 'best' support for the Lok Dal (LD best) were categorised as those in which the party achieved a share of the vote higher than the statewide mean share of the vote in one-third or more of the same assembly constituencies in the district in each of the three elections. Thus a district would be classified as amongst the best Lok Dal support if it contained, for example, 12 assembly constituencies of which the same four or more had recorded above state wide average share of the vote in all three elections. Conversely a district is included in the category having the 'worst' Lok Dal support (LD worst) if the share of the vote for the party was below the state wide average in one-third or more of the same assembly constituencies in each of the three election. Districts meeting neither of these criteria were classified as belonging to areas of 'medium' support for the Lok Dal (LD medium).

Although it is theoretically possible on this basis for a district to be classified simultaneously as belonging to areas of both best and worst support, no district in fact displayed such a pattern of electoral support for the Lok Dal. This approach resulted in 15 districts classified as showing the best support for the Lok Dal, 14 districts were classified as medium and 16 were classified as showing the worst support. The districts classified as showing the best support returned 54 percent of the successful Lok Dal candidates in 1974, 42 percent in 1980 and 57 percent in 1985, whilst those defined as the worst returned only 11 percent of the successful candidates in 1974, 17 percent in 1980 and 11 percent in 1985.

#### IV. AGRICULTURAL PERFORMANCE AND LOK DAL SUPPORT

Available evidence on agricultural performance tends to confirm the view that the Lok Dal was electorally strongest in districts demonstrating high levels of agricultural innovation, rates of growth and value of output. Bhalla and Tyagi's study [1989] provides district level data on agricultural productivity in terms of the value of output per hectare of the nineteen major crops measured at constant prices (an average of all-India prices in the years 1967-68, 1968-69 and 1969-70) for three triennial periods taken to represent prevailing conditions before the widespread introduction of the New Agricultural

strategy (1962-65), soon after its introduction (1970-83) [Bhalla and Tyagi, 1989: 6-8]. Their data have been reclassified in Table 1 to show the number of districts falling into their categories of productivity levels by strength of support for the Lok Dal. As Table 1 shows strength of support for the Lok Dal at the district level does seem to be associated with levels of agricultural productivity.

*Table 1*  
**NUMBER OF DISTRICTS BY PRODUCTIVITY LEVEL IN Rs/HECTARE AT CONSTANT PRICES (1967/8-1969/70) AND BY STRENGTH OF SUPPORT FOR LOK DAL**

	>Rs1750	Rs 1250-1750	Rs 1000-1249	Rs 750-999	Rs 500-749	<Rs 500
LD best	0	2	2	7	4	0
LD medium	0	0	0	9	5	0
LD worst	0	0	0	6	9	1
1970-73						
LD best	2	3	3	6	1	0
LD medium	0	0	3	10	1	0
LD worst	0	0	0	10	6	0
1980-83						
LD best	4	5	6	0	0	0
LD medium	1	4	8	1	0	0
LD worst	0	3	7	2	4	0

*Source: Derived from Bhalla and Tyagi, Patterns in Indian Agricultural Development: A district Level Study, pp. 84-94*

S. Mahendra Dev [1985], developing the work of Bhalla and Alagh [1979], arrives at a classification of districts based on the compound growth rates of the output of the nineteen major crops between the triennia of 1962-65 and that of 1975-78. These data have also been reclassified, in Table 2, to show the numbers of districts by strength of Lok Dal support in different categories of growth rates and again there is evidence of a clear association between the two factors. Similar results can be derived from the findings of J. Singh [1990] who, working with data relating mainly to the mid-1980, calculated a mean composite deviation index taking seventeen variables of agricultural development into account and produced a rank order of districts from which Table 3 has been derived. These data again show evidence of a strong association between districts of Lok Dal strength and indicators of agricultural development.



TABLE 2  
NUMBER OF DISTRICTS BY DEGREE OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND BY  
STRENGTH OF SUPPORT FOR THE LOK DAL

	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
LD best	2	3	6	4	0
LD Medium	0	0	7	7	0
LD worst	0	0	2	11	3

*Source: Derived from J. Singh, 'Regional Agricultural Disparities in Uttar Pradesh', The National Geographical Journal of India, Vol.36, Part 3, Sept. 1990*

What is particularly noticeable about the work from which these data are derived is the extent to which they show that in some non-western areas of the state, and particularly in those which strong support for the Lok Dal, agricultural development was not as laggardly as it was sometimes supposed to be. The degree to which eastern districts had experienced some degree of catching up with the more advanced sector of the west had been recognised by some observers and this trend has been more apparent in the period from the mid-1970s onwards. The expansion of tube well irrigation and increases in wheat yields were particularly dramatic in the eastern districts [Alagh, 1988: 35] with the consequence that the growth in wheat production in the east in the period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s was almost twice that in the west [Sharma and Poleman, 1994: 42]. In order to analyse the relationship between support for the Lok Dal and agricultural performance more closely, the available data on agricultural development have been aggregated for the groups of districts showing different levels of support for the Lok Dal and in addition the category of districts showing the best support for the Lok Dal has been sub-divided into western and not-western districts (see Table 4).

The first point to note about the districts in which the Lok Dal established its strongest support is that even before the impact of the introduction of the new agricultural technology, as measured by the indicators in 1962-65, they were more advanced, both in terms of value of output and use of inputs, than districts with medium support for the party and districts with the worst support trailed behind both other categories of districts. As Table 4 shows the value of the output of the 19 main crops in districts with the strongest support for the Lok Dal was Rs 920/hectare (at the average of 1967/68-69/70 prices) in the triennium 1962-65 compared to Rs 684/hectare in the districts

with the weakest support for the party. Similar differentials can be observed in the utilization of inputs. In all the variables measured here for the period 1962-65 the indicators of value of output and volume of inputs are ranked in the same order as strength of support for the Lok Dal. The districts in which the Lok Dal was later to be particularly successful, prior to the widespread introduction of the new technology, were already enjoying higher than average levels of both agricultural prosperity and utilization of agricultural inputs.

However, it should also be noted that this relative prosperity was very much confined to the western districts in which the Lok Dal was later to build strong support. If the data are disaggregated for the western and non-western areas of Lok Dal strength a somewhat different picture emerges with non-western areas exhibiting less dramatic evidence of agricultural development and prosperity. The non-western areas of the best Lok Dal support lagged behind the western areas in every area of utilization of inputs and in value of output. Even more significantly, in terms of use of tractors and pump sets, they were among the most backward regions in the state before the advent of the NAS.

The dominant position of the districts with the best support for the Lok Dal remains remarkably constant for value of output and use of inputs throughout the period under study as does the rank order of the groups of districts in terms of both inputs and outputs. Those districts showing the strongest support for the Lok Dal not only sustained their dominant position but also increased the differential between them and other groups of districts by maintaining the highest growth rate in value of output per hectare between the triennia 1962-65 and 1980-83, an increase of 64.6 percent compared with only 51.4 percent in the group of districts showing the weakest support. In areas of medium support the growth was 59.8 percent.

A similar pattern is evident in the final indicator examined here, the proportion of agricultural laborers in the agricultural workforce, taken as the combined total of cultivators and agricultural labourers, which is used here as an indicator of changes in the relations of production and in the labour process. It is necessary to be mindful of the changes in enumeration practices and techniques across the census years which make these data somewhat unreliable but even making allowances for those changes a significant trend emerges. The statewide figures show substantial increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers in the agricultural work force between 1961 and 1971 and a subsequent fall between 1971 and 1981, which are largely due to changes in techniques and instructions for enumeration. This pattern is observable for every category of district with the exception of the western

group of districts with the best support for the Lok Dal where the proportion continues to increase after 1971 and, as a consequence, this group of districts moves from being the one with the smallest proportion of agricultural labourers in the agricultural workforce in 1961 to the one with the largest proportion in 1981. In part this was the result of the high level of land transfer in the western districts in the latter part of the 1970s with marginal peasants joining the ranks of the landless [Hasan, 1994a: 171-2] and their land being acquired by more prosperous farmers as well as reflecting a high demand for labour in an area undergoing rapid agricultural development.

**TABLE 4**  
**AGRICULTURAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IN DISTRICTS GROUPED BY LOK DAL SUPPORT**

	Value of 19 main Groups (Rs. hectare)			Fertiliser use (Tonnes/1000ha.)			Tractors (No./1000 ha.)		
	1962-65	1970-73	1980-83	1962-65	1970-73	1980-83	1962-65	1970-73	1980-83
All Districts	798	958	1281	3.9	24.0	64.9	0.6	2.3	3.2
LD best	920	1160	1524	5.1	29.0	79.8	0.7	3.9	5.2
Western	1037	1375	1788	5.5	34.4	88.1	1.1	5.9	7.5
Non-western	735	809	1112	4.3	20.1	66.3	0.1	0.7	1.7
LD medium	811	918	1269	4.7	15.2	68.4	0.5	1.6	3.0
LD worst	684	799	1036	2.3	28.0	45.8	0.4	1.0	1.9

	Pump Sets (No./1000ha.)			Proportion of Agricultural Labourers in Agricultural Workforce		
	1962-65	1970-73	1980-83	1960	1970	1980
All Districts	2.2	16.3	31.3	15.8	27.0	22.2
LD best	3.6	21.9	41.8	16.5	29.4	26.7
Western	5.3	26.5	50.3	13.1	27.1	29.8
Non-western	0.9	14.3	28.6	19.1	31.9	23.0
LD Medium	1.9	16.6	30.9	15.5	26.1	22.1
LD worst	1.2	11.3	22.9	14.2	25.7	20.1

Sources: Derived from Bhalla and Tyagi, *Patterns in Indian agricultural Development: A District Level Study*, pp.225-54. Government of India, 1962, *Census of India 1961, Paper 1 of 1962, Final Population Totals*. Government of India, 1986, *Census of India 1981, Paper 2 of 1986, Comparative Primary Census Abstracts, 1971 and 1981*. Government of Uttar Pradesh, *Statistical Abstracts*.

*Note : Data relating to agricultural performance and inputs at the district level are subject to a wide range of limitation. Wherever possible the data use here from Bhalla and Tyagi [1989] have been checked against relevant data contained in the Statistical Abstract of the UP government and were found to be broadly in agreement. One exception should be mentioned which relates to the figure given by Bhalla and Tyagi for the numbers of tractors in Meerut in 1980-83 which is clearly misreported and in this case the figure used throughout this study has been taken from the UP Statistical Abstract for 1982.*

Although the performance of the western districts contributed a great deal to the overall position of the districts with the best support for the Lok Dal, the advances being made in the non-western districts with the best support for the Lok Dal must also be recognized. Whilst they remained in the lowest category in terms of the utilization of tractors, in part a reflection of the lower size of landholdings in the east, they made significant progress in other respects. Most spectacular was the rise in the utilization of private tube wells where this group of districts moved from being the lowest category in 1967 to being the highest in 1984 and as a consequence moved from a position of utilizing only around one-third of the state average of tube wells in 1967 to become a group of districts with almost twice the average Number of tube wells per cultivated area by 1984 (see Table 5).

TABLE 5  
PRIVATE TUBEWELLS IN DISTRICTS GROUPED BY LOK DAL SUPPORT

	1967		1984	
	Tubewells No.	Tubewells/ cultiv. area	Tubewells (no.)	Tubewells/ cultiv. area
All Districts	82636	4.6	669047	32.2
LD best	36843	6.8	345341	53.3
Western	33483	10.2	190797	48.4
Non-western	3360	1.6	154544	60.9
LD medium	24733	4.8	199509	33.1
LD worst	17718	2.8	116871	15.3

Source: Statistical Abstracts of Uttar Pradesh, 1966-68, 1983-84, Economics and Statistics Division, State Planning Institute, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, 1969, 1986.

The correlation matrix for the value or output per cultivated area of the nineteen main crops and the various indicators of agricultural development is given in Table 6 and whilst some of the sizes of individual cells are small and individual results should be traded with caution, the general patterns are worth noting. Not surprisingly the matrix shows a positive and significant

(at 0.05 level) correlation between the inputs considered here and the value of output per cultivated area across all districts for the three periods under study. However, this general relationship is not apparent in all of the groupings of districts, with the areas of best Lok Dal support, and particularly the western area of best support, showing the most consistent correlation between value of output and utilization of inputs across the three time periods, although the area of worst support also show consistent positive, if not always significant, correlations. It should also be noted that the correlation between the proportion of agricultural labourers in the total agricultural workforce and the value of output increases over time across the whole state but this is most pronounced within the group of districts in the west with the best Lok Dal support which tends to confirm the earlier suggestion that the degree of proletarianisation associated with increased utilization of agricultural inputs was most advanced in this group of districts.

**TABLE 6**  
**CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS OF VALUE OF OUTPUT OF 19 MAIN CROPS**  
**AND VARIOUS INDICATORS OF AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION**

Value/area of 19 main crops	Fertilizer/area	Tractors/area	Pumpsets/area	Agric. labourers
<b>1962-65</b>				
All Districts (n=47)	0.7114*	0.5998*	0.8259*	0.0091
LD best (n=15)	0.7991*	0.9282*	0.9011*	0.1611
Western (n=9)	0.9142*	0.9251*	0.8847*	0.5996
Non-western (n=6)	0.7106	-0.2789	-0.4925	0.3545
LD medium (n=14)	0.6615*	0.0232	0.5956*	0.0694
LD worst (n=15)	0.6169*	0.6882*	0.4418	-0.2372
<b>1970-73</b>				
All Districts (n=48)	0.7425*	0.8224*	0.3447*	0.0706
LD best (n=15)	0.8887*	0.8687*	0.9148*	0.2428
Western (n=9)	0.9033	0.8519*	0.8728*	0.5951
Non-western (n=6)	0.1918	-0.0374	0.5909	-0.2857
LD medium (n=14)	0.2264	-0.0727	0.3926	-0.2409
LD worst (n=16)	0.5642*	0.4932	0.3676	-0.2668
<b>1980-83</b>				
All Districts (n=48)	0.7661*	0.8059*	0.7231*	0.3031*
LD best (n=15)	0.7942*	0.9169*	0.8104*	0.7311*
Western (n=9)	0.8807	0.8789*	0.8439*	0.8246*
Non-western (n=6)	0.6939	0.5525	0.6705	-0.0348
LD medium (n=14)	0.5112	0.0564	0.5024	-0.1897
LD worst (n=16)	0.7362*	0.6481*	0.8044*	-0.3231

\*P = 0.05 or better

In Table 7 the correlations between the proportion of agricultural labourers in the total agricultural workforce and the degree of utilization of

inputs have been provided. Again whilst the individual results need to be treated with caution and the limitations of small samples recognized, the degree to which positive and significant correlations emerge in the group of districts in the western part of the state with the strongest support for the Lok Dal does suggest that the adoption of innovations in agriculture was associated with increasing proletarianisation. By the time of the last period under study (1980-83) and the utilization of all of the inputs considered here.

**TABLE 7**  
**CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS OF PROPORTION OF AGRICULTURAL**  
**LABOURERS IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE AND VARIOUS INDICATORS**  
**OF AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION**

Proportion of Agric. Labourers	Fertiliser/area	Tractors/area	Pumpsets/area
<b>1962-65</b>			
All Districts (n=47)	0.0784	0.0986-	0.0707
LD best (n=15)	0.3098	0.1801	-0.0112
Western (n=9)	0.5165	0.6388*	0.5562
Non-western (n=6)	0.3011	-0.1903	0.2896
LD medium (n=14)	0.0783	0.1894	-0.3957
LD worst (n=15)	-0.0909	0.0271	-0.1179
<b>1970-73</b>			
All Districts (n=48)	0.1714	0.1296	-0.0302
LD best (n=15)	0.4204	0.3359	0.2157
Western (n=9)	0.6280*	0.5594	0.6051*
Non-western (n=6)	0.4878	0.5825	0.1024
LD medium (n=14)	0.2435	-0.3255	-0.2736
LD worst (n=16)	-0.0503	-0.1488	-0.3119
<b>1980-83</b>			
All Districts (n=48)	0.1733	0.4514*	0.0415
LD best (n=15)	0.5552*	0.6279	0.5301*
Western (n=9)	0.6431*	0.6321*	0.8342*
Non-western (n=6)	0.0393	0.3802	-0.4541
LD medium (n=14)	-0.0195	0.0839	-0.4541
LD worst (n=16)	-0.2726	0.4754*	0.5147*

\*P= 0.05 or better

Finally it is worth remarking that across the state as a whole during the period under study, although once again to varying degrees in areas of different levels of support for the Lok Dal, both value of output per unit area and value of output per unit of labour are increasing. The coexistence of increases in crop yield and labour productivity is often taken as evidence of and emerging commercial agriculture and increasing capital accumulation

[Prasad: 1991]. In Table 8 the annual average changes in both yield and labour productivity are given for the groups of districts with different levels of support for the Lok Dal.

TABLE 8  
AVERAGE ANNUAL PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN VALUE PER AREA CULTIVATED  
(1962/65-1980/83) AND VALUE PER AGRICULTURAL WORKER (1961-1981)  
OF 19 MAIN CROPS

	Value per area	Value per worker
All Districts	+3.4	+3.2
LD best	+3.6	+3.5
Western	+4.0	+2.1
Non-western	+2.9	+4.6
LD medium	+3.1	+3.4
LD worst	+2.9	+2.7

*Sources: Derived from Bhalla and Tyagi, patterns in Indian Agricultural Development: A District Level Study, pp.225-54. Government of India, 1962, Census of India 1961, Paper 1 of 1962, Final Population Totals. Government of India, 1986, Census of India 1981, Paper 2 of 1986, Comparative Primary Census Abstracts, 1971 and 1981.*

Whilst it is always necessary to keep in mind the limitations of aggregate ecological analyses of this kind the various data examined here do suggest a very strong association at the level of the district between agricultural prosperity and innovation and support for the Lok Dal in the period up to 1985. Whilst this association was particularly strong in the western areas showing the best support for the party, the extent to which it was also associated with significant, if less spectacular, agricultural progress in the other districts with strong support for the Lok Dal should not be underestimated. It appears that the Lok Dal was able to articulate a clear appeal to the more prosperous sections of peasants and farmers and build a collective political and electoral identity based on the benefits of participation, or possibly the aspiration of more effective participation, in the NAS even though these benefits had a differential impact in the various regions of the state.

We have already pointed out that the mobilization of this identity was not entirely based upon class or participation in the NAS; it was assisted to a very great extent by appeals to, and mobilization through, other identities at a local level and particularly by caste identities. However these local identities were as much a potential hindrance to the political project of the Lok Dal as they were a help. **The important point to appreciate is that the**

unifying identity of class subsumed other identities of region and caste even though these latter identities were exploited by the Lok Dal in its local level electoral efforts. The Lok Dal, through its political practice, emphasized the salience of prosperity and participation in the NAS and used caste networks to mobilize electorally whilst at the same time holding in check the potentially divisive identities of caste and those deriving from the regionally differential benefits of agricultural development. In this respect the electoral success of the Lok Dal in the period between 1974 and 1985 was not simply the expression of its existence; its activities, strategy and political practice were also determining factors in the construction of an electoral identity.

## V. THE LOK DAL AFTER 1985

The Lok Dal entered a period of decline after 1985 from which it has never recovered. The party was riven by dissent and factionalism and eventually split into two organizations. Although it could be said that in its new incarnation, as part of the Janata Dal coalition, it contributed to victory of that party in Uttar Pradesh in both the national and state elections of 1989, even this success was marred by factional strife [Gould, 1993a: 28-9] and it was seen by some as the 'last hurrah' for the sort of politics that the Lok Dal had come to represent [Brass, 1993a: 126]. What then were the factors which accounted for the collapse?

First was the crisis of leadership and organisation which accompanied Charan Singh's protracted illness and eventual death in May 1987. His son, Ajit Singh, attempted to succeed to the leadership but was challenged by Mulayam Singh Yadav who had become the Lok Dal leader in the Legislative Assembly after the 1985 elections. Mulayam, in spite of being the leader of a smaller group of legislators than Ajit Singh after the elections of 1989, became the Chief Minister largely because he was perceived as the 'natural leader' of the opposition to Congress in the state and because he was the preferred candidate of the smaller groupings whose votes were needed to secure a majority in the assembly [Gould, 1993a: 29]. Ajit Singh then began on a journey of factional manoeuvre which earned him the title of the 'Jumping Jat' and ended with him joining the Congress after the state elections in UP in 1993. Mulayam as leader of the dominant, although minority, Assembly Janata Dal faction, possibly could have retained control of a coherent legislature grouping and party organization but in fact was involved in a series of factional struggles and realignments which saw him split first from the Janata Dal to form the Samajwadi Janata Party and then constitute a separate Samajwadi Party [Fickett, 1993]. Although Mulayam



had, by the early 1990s, re-established a strong control over his own party, in the intervening period the organizational coherence which had played a large part in the previous electoral success of the Lok Dal had been lost.

The accession to the post of Chief Minister by Mulayam Singh Yadav, who retained his position until June 1991 and was again Chief Minister from November 1993 until June 1995, had profound implications for the continuation of the strategy that had been pursued by the Lok Dal and was the second major factor in the collapse of the strategy which had brought it so much success. It was not simply the Mulayam was a Yadav and that this produced tension in a movement that had from its inception been under the leadership of Jats, or that his two periods as Chief Minister saw frequent accusations of the preferment of Yadavs to public office appointments. Far more important was the fact that Mulayam Singh Yadav came from the Lohiaite socialist tradition of the Samyukta Socialist Party and was seeking to construct a quite different collective identity for the purposes of electoral mobilization from that which had characterized the practice of the Lok Dal [Duncan, 1997]. His strategy was to revive the Lohiaite practice of alliances both with Dalit communities and organizations [Omvedt, 1994: 272-7] and with Muslims, and to place a far greater emphasis on the collective identity of the backward classes, which did not include the Jats, than the Lok Dal had ever done.

In this last strategy he was assisted by the announcement by central government in August 1990 that the recommendations of the Mandal Commission Report, giving far greater public sector job reservations to the backward classes than before, were to be implemented. The beneficial provisions of the Mandal Commission Report did not extend to the Jats and in the widespread disturbances that accompanied the announcement in August 1990 of the implementation of Mandal, many Jats were involved in demonstrations against its recommendations [Hasan, 1994a: 184] and Mulayam as Chief Minister came in for heavy criticism of his handling of police action against the demonstrators. Although Mandal gave a new impetus to the solidarity of the backward classes, most importantly the Yadavs, it brought the alliance of Yadavs and Jats which had been of such importance to the Lok Dal under severe strain.

The decision of Mulayam to ally with the predominantly Dalit Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) for the 1993 Assembly elections represented another departure from the earlier strategy of the Lok Dal. Whilst an electoral alliance with between previous supporters of the Lok Dal and the Dalits may be possible, but not without considerable difficulties and tensions, in some areas, this is not the case in the western areas of the state where Jat

hegemony does not allow for co-operation with Dalits (see Lerche [1994]: Lerche [1995] for a discussion of the different relationships between Dalits and their employers in east and west UP). This is not to say that Dalits in the past had not voted for the Lok Dal in the western parts of the state, they certainly had but largely at either the behest of, or as a consequence of their dependence on, landowners, often Jats, in the region. The rise of the BSP as an autonomous and assertive political organization of a previously subordinate and dependent group has received some attention [Lerche, 1994: 15-16; Gould, 1993a: 31-33; Gould, 1993b; Singh, 1993: 103-9; Joshi, 1987; Sanal Kumar, 1995; Pinto, 1995; Lieten, 1994; Kothari, 1994; Srinivasulu, 1994; Ilaiah, 1994; Duncan, 1997 but it deserves more, both in its own right and as a major new element in the dynamics of rural politics and the farmers movement in UP.

The Lok Dal after 1985 also had to cope with the rise of the BKU under the leadership of Mahendra Singh Tikait in western UP. This movement has been the subject of enormous interest from both journalists and academics [Dhanagar, 1988; Gupta, 1988; Hasan, 1989c; Hasan, 1994a; Singh, 1993; Lindberg, 1994] and there is no need to re-examine its history here except to isolate some features which were of particular relevance to the continuation of the collective identity established by the Lok Dal. First the BKU was confined to a small number of western districts and was predominantly an organization of rich farmers particularly those involved in sugarcane cultivation. Second it was an organization with very close ties to, and to some extent simply an extension of, the Jat clan structures in this region. Third it made a virtue of not being involved in party political activity and directed its members in spectacular displays of direct action in the area of its influence as well as in Delhi and the UP state capital Lucknow. During one of these agitations in July 1990 Mulayam banned a rally being organized by the BKU in Lucknow and there followed a week of demonstrations with two protesters killed and over 20,000 arrests made. Eventually Mulayam had to back down and make concessions to the BKU after a revolt developed within his party, particularly from legislators and party workers from the western districts, who pointed out that Tikait's movement represented a huge constituency of support that could not be alienated without serious electoral repercussions. The emergence of the BKU provided a separate organizational focus for farmers who had previously supported the Lok Dal, introduced new methods of campaigning and a new emphasis on direct action and was corrosive of the political identity of the Lok Dal inasmuch as it emphasized the separate identity of the western districts, of the Jats and of the rich sugarcane growers. Mulayam attempted to counter this influence

by special attention to the needs of the western areas but in the elections of 1991 and 1993 the Jats of the west voted overwhelmingly for the Bharatiya Janata Party.

More recently there have been signs that a rapprochement between Mulayam and the Jats is still possible. In September 1994 Tikait welcomed Mulayam to a huge rally in Sisauli in Muzaffarnagar district in the heart land of BKU support and declared Mulayam to be the 'true inheritor' of the legacy of Charan Singh. Mulayam responded, in a reference to Jat grievances about the Mandal Report, by announcing that the question of reservation quotas for Jats was still under consideration and that members of the caste could be included within its provisions. Two months later Mulayam returned to Muzaffarnagar to announce a generous new pension scheme for small farmers and used the occasion to stress the continuity between his policies and those of Charan Singh.

Finally the baleful influence of the rise of Hindutva politics on the fortunes of the Lok Dal needs to be considered briefly. Zoya Hasan [1994a] has analysed this question closely and provided a detailed account of the related dynamics of the politics surrounding the reaction to Mandal Commission Report and those of Hindutva and the effect of both on the farmers movement in western UP. It only needs to be added that Mulayam's attempts to forge an alliance with the Muslims and combat the growing influence of communalism through his sadbhavna (anti-communal) rallies, started in August 1990, and his robust stand against the Ayodhya demonstrators in the first wave of agitation in October 1990, alienated not just some of the Jats of the western region but also members of his own caste. For example it was reported that most of those killed in the police firings in Ayodhya on 30 October were Yadavs and that even close relatives of his were present at the demonstration.

After 1985 the collective electoral identity established by the Lok Dal was assailed by the rise of the politics of Mandal and Hindutva, by the emergence of a separate political identity amongst the Jats of western UP and by the party's loss of organizational coherence. However it also came under strain and was eventually destroyed by the new political strategy pursued by Mulayam Singh Yadav which was concerned with the construction of a collective identity of a quite different sort.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The electoral strategy of the Lok Dal before 1985 was one which gave priority to the construction across the state of UP of a collective identity of

peasants and farmers participating, or seeking to participate more effectively, in the opportunities opened up by the introduction of the new agricultural strategy. That is not to say that the Lok Dal did not also utilize other identities at the more local level in its political mobilization, but a large part of the secret of its electoral success was its ability, through its political practice, to subsume, subordinate and contain those other identities and collectivities. It was a party that succeeded in articulating the diverse interests of different castes, of different regions and of peasants and farmers deriving very different levels of benefits from participation in agricultural development and the degree to which it achieved its success was remarkable. The Lok Dal is better understood as a party creating and articulating new interests and aspirations rather than one which simply mobilised traditional identities. It was engaged not so much in a political process driven by the primordialism of caste, communalism and locality as one which involved the instrumental assertion of new interests and identities create in the changed circumstances brought about by the introduction and expansion of the new agricultural strategy. After 1985 circumstances changed as the political process and discourse, the strategies of political parties, and in some cases the possibilities for individual and collective advancement, came to be dominated more by the opportunities perceived to be offered through caste reservation and communalism than by those associated with participation in the new agricultural strategy.

## NOTES

1. The name Lok Dal is used here for the purposes of consistency and simplicity. In fact the party has been known by a number of names during the last four decades. It began life as a dissident faction within the Congress and broke away to form the Jan Congress after the elections of 1967. The Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) was formed in time for the 1969 elections and it retained that name until merger with the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) in time for the elections of 1974 when it became the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD) although the candidates in 1974 of both the SSP and BKD stood on the BKD ticket. After the Emergency the BLD became part of the ruling Janata coalition and remained part of it until mid-1979 when one faction, mainly Charan Singh's supporters, split to form the Janata (Secular). Its candidates contested both the parliamentary and Assembly elections of 1980 under this title. The party then became the Lok Dal but also had a brief incarnation as the Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party. The party later split into rival factions, the Lok Dal (A) and the Lok Dal (B) both of which joined the Janata Dal.
2. The election results of 1977 are not included in this study as the Lok Dal contested as part of the Janata alliance and it is therefore impossible to disaggregate its performance from that of the alliance as a whole. Overall the Janata polled 48 percent of the vote and won 352 seats in the UP Assembly, of

these some 164 seats were won by candidates identified with the Lok Dal [Kohli, 1987: 192]

3. See Brass [1978]; Ahmad [1977]; Frankel [1975] for discussions on the question of appropriate levels of analysis of aggregate ecological electoral data.
4. The classification of districts was as follows:

Best: Aligarh, Allahabad, Azamgarh, Bijnor, Bulandshahr, Etawah, Ghazipur, Jaunpur, Mathura, Mainpuri, Meerut (including Ghaziabad), Muzaffarnagar, Pratapgarh, Saharanpur and Unnao.

Medium: Agra, Badaun, Ballia, Barabanki, Basti, Deoria, Etah, Faizabad, Farrukabad, Fatehpur, Jalaun, Moradabad, Pilibhit and Varanasi.

Worst: Bahraich, Banda, Bareilly, Gorakhpur, Gonda, Hamirpur, Hardoi, Jhansi (including Lalitpur), Kanpur, Kheri, Lucknow, Mirzapur, Rai Bareli, Shahjahanpur, Sitapur and Sultanpur,

The sparsely populated hill districts are excluded from the detailed study but the Dehra Dun, Rampur and Nainital are included in 'whole state' calculations. The absence of some data for Shahjahanpur for the 1960s means that it is also excluded from some later calculations. Reorganisation of some district boundaries in UP during the period covered by the study has been allowed for.

5. India Today, 15 July 1990.
6. Times of India, 16 Sept. 1994.
7. Times of India, 19 Sept. 1994.
8. Times of India, 10 Nov. 1994.
9. India Today, 30 Nov. 1990

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