

By Sidharth Mishra



The entry of a tantric, a dog and a few pigeons and the shift in the focus of the ongoing assembly poll campaign in Bihar from development and caste to occult marks a paradigm shift in the state's politics and society. It's after a long time that the image of a non-BJP leader seeking the indulgence of a Hindu priest, rather a holy man, has emerged in the public domain.

The poll campaign in Bihar two months back had started on an unbelievable note with both the main political gladiators – the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance and Nitish Kumar's Grand Alliance talking of development as their prime agenda. However, as the campaign progressed, its real nature got unveiled. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi calling Lalu Prasad Yadav's Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) as Rashtriya Jadu Tona Dal, the campaign has come to its "pettiest" stage.

"Laluji, please change the name of your party to Rashtriya Jadoo-Tona Dal," the Prime Minister said addressing a rally at Marhaura in Chapra on Sunday last as the campaign for the crucial third phase began. He went onto to add, "Now I know that there are not three but four players in this Mahagatbandhan: Laluji, Nitishji, Soniaji and tantric." The Prime Minister's comments followed the release of a video clip showing Chief Minister Nitish Kumar cosying up to a tantric (occult practitioner). Soon images of Lalu Yadav at a prayer with a dog for company too entered the cyber world.

The Prime Minister's comments aside, the video must have also left the admirers of the Bihar Chief Minister red-faced. The image of Kumar, which so far has been projected as that of an epitome of progressive thinking, forward looking and development oriented politician, has suffered a setback. One cannot say for sure how much influence does the tantric in the video enjoys on the Chief Minister, but it certainly has given his baiters some ammunition. No wonder the Prime Minister said at one of the rallies, "There's no need for any tantric, democracy is enough to save Bihar and its people."

Occult or "Jadoo Tona", as said in the local parlance, formed part of a very dominant political idiom not only in Bihar but whole Hindi heartland politics in the pre-Mandal days. With the Brahmins, Thakurs, Bhumihars and Kayasthas being great patrons of religious rituals, holy men, priests and tantrics found great acceptance among politicians. Two political personalities who were alleged to use tantric means to get rid of their rivals were Bihar veteran Jagannath Mishra

Process of political Sanskritisation

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 28 October 2015 04:20

and Varanasi strongman Kamalapati Tripathi.

One may still recall that the

India Today

magazine in June 1986 had carried a very lucid account of Tripathi ordering tantric rituals to overcome his political adversaries in the evening of his long political innings. Having risen to become the working president of the Congress under Indira Gandhi, Tripathi found himself under siege after Rajiv Gandhi came to power.

He is said to have ordered continues recitation of “Baglamukhi” mantra to get rid of his detractors. The mantra went like this – “

Hlin baglamukhi sarvatushtanam vachmukhi stambhaya jivvihakdolaya kolaya buddhinashaya hlin on swahaha

”, meaning those who speak against me, let a spike be driven through his tongue, let his brain be destroyed.

As Rajiv Gandhi, in those heady days, prepared to rid the party of Indira loyalists, first expelling Pranab Mukherjee and then taking on Tripathi, the Brahmin politician from Varanasi summoned priests from the holy city at his 9 Janpath residence to carry out the ritual. These Brahmins did the ‘jaap’ (recitation) using a rosary of turmeric beads for counting, offering yellow flowers around a yellow flame using yellow rice. The only relief that Tripathi got was that he was allowed to move into his sunset as a Congressman and not receive an expulsion order like the much younger Mukherjee.

In neighbouring Bihar, Jagannath Mishra was “credited” with the successful use of “

Maran

” mantra on his Brahmin rival Kedar Pandey. A former chief minister, Pandey was a minister at the Centre in Indira Gandhi’s Cabinet when he suddenly passed away in the early 1980s, making Mishra the undisputed leader of the powerful Brahmin community in the state. Mishra never countered these whispers, but rather built his “religious” image wearing a ring on every finger of different gemstones to keep celestial bodies favourable to him.

To the credit of Lalu Prasad Yadav, the longest surviving ambassador of social justice and empowerment of the other backward classes, following the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report, Tantricism and other religious ritual went out of vogue. Lalu in his early years made it a point to deride the Brahmins and the Brahmanical rituals. Though Lalu took to religious ways after he got involved in the infamous fodder scam, his prayers and related rituals largely remained a closely guarded secret.

Maybe due to his political alliance with the BJP in the past, Nitish Kumar never had any qualms

Process of political Sanskritisation

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 28 October 2015 04:20

about public participation in Hindu religious rituals. In fact when his estranged wife Manju Sinha passed away, he carried out extensive 'kriya' and 'shraddh' ceremony in full public view, reminding one of Rajiv Gandhi's participation in similar rituals when Indira Gandhi died. Gandhi was addressing a political constituency, as was Nitish in carrying out these rituals.

However, now on the other side of the political divide, it could prove ominous for Nitish Kumar to be seen in the company of a tantric. To add to Kumar's embarrassment the tantric in the video makes no bones about his dislike for Lalu Prasad Yadav, Nitish Kumar's poll ally. The video, if nothing else, underlines the difference in social perceptions of Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad Yadav. While Kumar is not averse to making a show of his social Sanskritisation; Lalu Yadav would have none of it. So the process of social churning and change has indeed entered a crucial phase.

(The author is Consulting Editor,

[Millennium Post](#)

)