The paradox of political representation

YOGENDRA YADAV

POLITICAL representation faces a paradox in contemporary India. On the one hand, the practice of representative democracy for over half a century has led to a widening of the pool from which political representatives are recruited, accompanied by a reduction in the mismatch between the social profile of the representatives and those who are represented. This deepening of representative democracy coexists, on the other hand, with a thinning of the very idea of representation.

The institutional designs for filtering claims to representation, devices for popular control over elected representatives, and the mechanisms for linking the policy agenda of representative institutions with the needs and desires of the represented have not kept pace with democratic upsurge from below. Progress on 'Who is the representative?' is accompanied by a step back in 'What does the representative do?' A focus on these two questions takes our attention away from 'What gets represented?', the foundational concern of political representation.

The intensity of the paradox is matched by our collective inability to look simultaneously at both sides that constitute this paradox, resulting in an avoidable divide in our public responses to the quality of Indian democracy.[1] One set of observers note, quite accurately, the broadening of the base of political representatives, thanks to the inauguration of the constitutionally protected third tier of democracy.[2] One need not rely upon the moving but episodic tales of the revolutionary dalit mahila sarpanch to register the staggering expansion in the number of political representatives – from about 4000 MPs and MLAs in the country to well over 30 lakh elected representatives in panchayat and nagarpalika bodies. Clearly, an expansion of this order cannot but change the social profile of the elected representatives, bringing it closer to the social profile of the electors.

This expansion coincides with and reinforces a noticeable shift in the social profile of the elected representatives in the upper tiers as well.[3] The stranglehold of the Hindu upper caste elite, well versed in the language and protocols of modern democracy, has loosened to yield some space to the elite from the non-

dwija and often non-dominant 'backward' communities, especially in the Hindi heartland. This has contributed to the confidence of the political leaders from lower social order and their chances of claiming some of the highest positions in our representative democracy. The spectacular and justly celebrated rise of leaders like Mayawati or Lalu Prasad Yadav becomes the public face of this social transformation.[4] On a narrow reading, divorced from issues of substantive agenda and policy consequences, this transformation appears as nothing short of a social revolution through the ballot.[5]

Another set of observers of Indian democracy focus, quite appropriately, if narrowly, on the representation, or rather the lack of it, of popular issues and concerns in the political and policy agenda. It does not take much to register the 'distance' of political representatives from those they seek to represent, resulting in a routine sense of popular frustration. This frustration gets reflected in the voluble complaints about political corruption and the very high attrition rate, arguably one of the highest in democratic systems, of the incumbent MPs and MLAs in the Lok Sabha and assembly elections.[6] Ordinary citizens feel that they are at the mercy of political leaders, unable as they often are to contact, let alone control, their elected political representatives.

If the exercise of legislative and executive power for redistribution of resources in keeping with the priorities of the citizens is one measure of the working of the representational mechanism, the record of Indian democracy would appear pretty dismal. The lack of connect between public opinion on the role of the state in matters economic and the policies of economic 'liberalization' followed by successive regimes is a good example of this democratic deficit.[7]

The rise of political leaders from lower social order in recent times has rarely been accompanied by any substantial policy measures or use of governmental power for the benefit of the lower social order. More often than not, as in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in the 1990s, a steep rise in the political representation of the 'backward' castes has been characterized by a period of governmental mess and non-performance. No wonder, this perspective draws attention to the severe deficits of representation. Add to this some ideological purism and an upper caste vantage point, and the deficit appears as nothing short of a failure or a crisis of representative democracy.[8]

This paradox plays out differently in the different domains of the democratic arena. The most common form it takes is that of an encounter between a dynamic political process and an inflexible institutional response. The

simultaneous rise and decline of the state as the effective unit of political representation in national politics serves as a good illustration of this type of encounter. With competitive politics taking a decisive 'regional' turn, the state has become the effective level of political choice in a Lok Sabha election.

In the 1970s and 1980s, voters in the state assembly elections voted as if they were choosing their prime minister; since the 1990s they vote in Lok Sabha elections as if they are choosing their chief minister. This shift in favour of the state in the lower house has been accompanied by a serious and substantial dilution of state representation in the upper house of the Parliament. As political parties freely shuffle nominations to the Rajya Sabha with little regard to domicile and little fear of loss of credibility, the constitutional design of the upper chamber as representing the interests of the states stands subverted. The Supreme Court's decision[9] upholding the legal dilution of residential requirement in Rajya Sabha was in this respect a fatal setback.

This paradoxical development has produced a consequence that no one designed or anticipated: as the Lok Sabha, rather than the Rajya Sabha, becomes the principal arena for the representation of states, the onus of maintaining federal balance has also shifted to the Lok Sabha. This has served to legitimise an ill-conceived freeze in the Lok Sabha on the number of seats for each state which violates the basic principle of one-person-one-vote, besides working to the disadvantage of some of the already disadvantaged units of the Indian Union.

A similar encounter between the political process and the institutional frame can be seen at the third tier of democracy. The passage of the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution and the extension of constitutionally secured representative politics to the third tier, perhaps in a fit of legislative absent-mindedness, set into motion a political process that appears to be gaining momentum. But the political establishment, with honourable exceptions like the current Minister of Panchayati Raj at the Centre, appears determined not to grant any real powers or resources to the new tier of political representation.

Instead of redistributing resources and redirecting developmental policies at the local level, the principal function that the third tier now performs is to supply cadre and lower level functionaries to political parties in desperate need of an organization. Often it is much worse: the political energy released by this process leads to an intense, violent but vacuous quest for local political dominance.

The second form that the paradox of participation takes is the simultaneous advance and retreat in the political representation of the lower social order. It seems as though democrats in our country are happy to live with gross violations of even the elementary principles of representation, while being strident and self-congratulatory about some relatively minor issues. There is no doubt that the post-Mandal era in our polity has led to some improvement in the presence of landowning or otherwise numerically large OBC communities in the Hindi heartland states. Even though the quantum of change is much smaller than is popularly believed and the legislatures continue to massively over-represent the forward castes, there is a qualitative change in the political dynamics as the momentum has shifted away from the hitherto dominant communities.

Yet this advancement comes with built-in stagnation and retreat. The rise in political representation of some backward communities has not led to a corresponding rise in the representation of many other communities that would be a part of the 'lower social order'. There is little awareness about or willingness to engage with the severe under-representation of the 'lower' OBCs or the most backward castes cutting across the North-South divide.

Similarly there is little attention to an equally severe under-representation of the 'maha dalits',[10] the dalit communities at the bottom of the Scheduled Castes. The Sachar Committee report has served to bring some attention to the gross under-representation of the Muslims in the Parliament and state assemblies,[11] but the issue is yet to acquire national salience necessary for any remedial action. The rise of caste-based parties has triggered a political aspiration among many of these under-represented communities, but this aspiration hits an intellectual and political dead end since there is neither a design nor the will to push for better representation for them.

There is little improvement in the political representation of marginalised social groups like women and the poor that do not possess a self-conscious political identity. The Women's Reservations Bill has brought some attention to the fact that women's presence in legislatures has actually witnessed a marginal decline since independence.[12] There is no such data to track the presence of the 'poor' in our legislatures. But if the episodic analysis of the disclosures of property filed by candidates at the time of their nominations is anything to go by, our legislatures are dominated by the super-rich.[13]

This is hardly surprising, since the minimum resources required to seriously contest an election have kept

escalating, most political parties lack organizational norms for selection of candidates and there is little flow of 'white money' into political parties. Let alone the poor, anyone who does not have access to vast, unaccountable and disposable wealth has little chance of getting a 'ticket' with the partial exception of the Communist parties. No serious institutional devices have been evolved to help the have-nots from registering their presence in representative bodies.

Proposals of one form or another for state funding of elections have been lying before Parliament for the last two decades but a cartel of big parties and rich politicians has ensured a silence on this question.[14] If anything, institutional intervention has worked to the contrary. Just as the politics in the rapidly expanding urban centres begins to be organized along class divisions, there come up institutional devices, including the latest delimitation, to keep the urban poor under-enfranchised.

The third, the most invisible and perhaps the most debilitating form of the paradox of representation is that the discussion on quality of representation is being reduced to the social identity of the representative precisely at a time when the political representative is increasingly marginal to the most vital decisions concerning legislation and governance. First, the passage of the anti-defection law in its second incarnation has left little discretion with an MP or an MLA who does not wish to risk losing her or his seat. Hence, much of the derivative expectation on the mandate and role of an individual legislator is now redundant in our context. As far as the already diminishing business of legislation is concerned, there can only be one answer to the classical question of whom the elected representatives represent: they cannot but represent their political party.

The more important question thus is: Who do the parties represent? This is related to the second development, namely the rise of political families or the party supremo with a coterie, which complicates much of the routine discussion about the nature of political representation. True the political families come from a more diverse social background than before: it was earlier difficult to imagine non-dwija families like those of the Gowdas, Marans, Badals, Chautalas or Mulayam Singh Yadavs wielding the kind of political clout they do today. But it would be facile to assume that these families represent the interest of the communities they come from. The rule of political families or the supremo from agrarian communities has proved to be more conducive for the capture of state power by organized industrial and business interests than was the case before.

Third, the issue of political representation itself is declining in salience due to a shift in the locus of decision-making from the legislature and executive to independent bodies and the judiciary. Simultaneously, the media has emerged as the key and not-so-neutral mediator in how any political issue is represented to the public and

thus sets limits to the political agenda. It is no coincidence that the judiciary and the media have remained mostly untouched even by the limited presence of the lower social order[15] as in the legislatures and thus immune to the pressures of the democratic upsurge.

The latest delimitation of the Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies needs to be viewed in the light of this larger understanding of the paradox of representation in contemporary India.[16] It suggests that we should judge the latest delimitation exercise mainly on whether it deepens democracy rather than assessing it on purely procedural grounds or with reference to some abstract principles of delimitation. If this argument is of value, the questions to ask are: Has the latest delimitation kept pace with the democratic upsurge of our times? Does it contribute to the capacity of our institutional mechanism to respond to the political dynamism unleashed by the rise of the 'lower orders of society'? Does it allow a better connect between the represented, the representatives and the representations? In that sense, an assessment of the delimitation exercise must not be confined to a criticism of the final order of the Delimitation Commission. Such an assessment cannot but implicate the Parliament, the Delimitation Commission and entire political establishment that participated in this exercise.

It is important to sort out the criteria of assessment, for a gigantic and incredibly complex exercise like this one is bound to invite comment, criticism and controversy. The final order of the Delimitation Commission has been debated in the media, the political circles and the Parliament itself and subjected to severe criticism in various fora, including this issue of *Seminar,* on various grounds: the composition of the Delimitation Commission, its procedures, guidelines and of course its substantial orders with regard to the way the boundaries have been drawn and finally, the reservation of seats. The degree and the tone of the criticism suggests that this delimitation order has drawn sharper reactions than its predecessors. If the discussion in the Lok Sabha (excerpts reproduced in this issue) is anything to go by, the political class has certainly been less than warm to this round of fixing the boundaries.

Yet it may be too rash to conclude from the reception of the commission's order that the latest delimitation is not as good as its predecessors. Institutions like the Delimitation Commission perform a thankless job in any

democracy. If it does its job well, it would have helped those who are silent and mostly unaware of such an order; at the same time it would have hurt some of the most powerful persons in public life and invited criticism which it cannot respond to. Therefore, one needs to be extra-cautious in finding fault with what the commission has decided. Besides, if the reception today is more critical, it could well be a function of the greater openness of public debate and the increased clout of the media compared to the times when the last delimitation took place three decades ago.

It is also necessary to place our assessment in a larger comparative frame of the experience of drawing political boundaries in other countries.[17] The delimitation exercise acquires a special significance in countries like ours that follow the first-past-the-post system with single member district, for it has the potential of affecting the overall political outcome of elections. There are many countries, including the US, where fixing the boundaries is a blatantly partisan act of political fixing so as to benefit one party.

In this context we must note that the Delimitation Commission has continued with the tradition of non-partisanship that has marked the boundary drawing exercise in our country. While it has not escaped criticism on specific counts for orders that on the face of it appear less than fair, there has been no suggestion from any quarter that the entire exercise was orchestrated to favour any political party. This indicates a healthy degree of institutionalization of the delimitation process and underlines the wisdom of the makers of our Constitution in providing for a mechanism for delimitation in the founding document.

While the delimitation shows the virtues of non-partisanship, it also drives home why non-partisanship is not the only, or even the most salient, virtue of political design. Besides being non-partisan, a political design must also be intelligent in the sense of anticipating the long term political consequences of that design and in creating a structure of incentives and disincentives to achieve the desired objects. Judged against this somewhat demanding expectation, the latest delimitation exercise is difficult to be proud of.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this first mapping of the political geography of the country in the 21st century did not face up to some of the key challenges of the demographic and political transition in our republic. The country has missed a major opportunity to align the political map to the emerging political reality of our democracy. Thanks to an extraordinary decision by the political class to postpone the next delimitation for another three decades – India is perhaps the only country in the world to have such a long gap between boundary drawing exercises – the infirmities of the current delimitation have been woven into the texture of representation for the next generation.

Since the commission has not, at least so far, released any narrative report outlining the rationale behind its order, it is not easy to infer the larger understanding that informed it. But the information available in the public domain – press reports, accounts of some associate members and the parliamentary debates – gives an impression of an exercise that kept a safe distance from the burden of a larger understanding of democratic transformation on the one hand and the nitty-gritty of technical expertise on electoral system design on the other. It is hard to detect any overall perspective in this case-by-case approach. This approach marks most of the attempts at political designing in our country.

The first big opportunity missed was to reapportion the share of seats for different states in keeping with their current share of the country's population.[18] The blame for this must be laid at the doors of the Parliament. The Parliament tied the hands of this commission with a constitutional amendment that froze the number of Lok Sabha seats for each state as per their share in population in the 1971 Census. This was an unusual extension of an extraordinary amendment that flouts the basic constitutional and democratic principle of one person, one vote, one value.

When the amendment was first passed during the Emergency, the rationale offered was that a freeze in parliamentary seats would not disincentivise the states that sought to control population growth. While the latest extension did not repeat this funny reasoning, it has not cared to provide a fresh one. Clearly, what appears a whimsical decision has over time congealed into an unstated federal contract between the North and the South. It remains to be seen if this amendment would stand judicial scrutiny. It has already passed the test of political consensus, thanks to the advent of coalition politics at the Centre.

The consequences of the freeze have been summarised in the accompanying table. Clearly the bigger gainer in this political bargain is Tamil Nadu, whose share in the Lok Sabha would have come down from the current kitty of 39 to just 32 if the seats were reapportioned as per the population share in 2001. Conversely, Uttar Pradesh would have gained seven seats. The big gainers are loaded in the South: Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh. The big losers are from the Hindi heartland: Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, besides Maharashtra.

We do not have robust population estimates to do the same calculation for 2031 which would be the basis for the next delimitation. But we are clearly looking at a loss and gain of upwards of 50 Lok Sabha seats by that

time. The longer the freeze persists, the more drastic and difficult any defreeze would become. It seems that unless there is a judicial intervention we may have to live with unequal value of the votes cast by the citizens in different parts of the country.

While there was at least some logic to freezing the number of Lok Sabha seats, the Parliament's decision to freeze the number of assembly seats was simply beyond any reason. So we are fated to persist with an anomalous situation of Uttar Pradesh with five assembly segments in each Lok Sabha constituency compared to six in Bihar and Maharashtra and seven in AP and West Bengal. This is not a formal point. An increase in the size of the assembly would have reduced the number of voters that each MLA is expected to represent and thus helped greater political accountability and better connect between the electors and their elected representative.

Apportionment of seats in the Lok Sabha Over- and Under-representation of States Using the 2001 Census Figures			
	Seats current	*Proportional seats using2001 Census population*	*Over- and Under-representation*
All India	524	524	
Andhra Pradesh	42	39	3
Assam	14	14	0
Bihar	40	43	-3
Chhattisgarh	11	11	0
Gujarat	26	26	0
Haryana	10	11	-1

Himachal Pradesh	4	3	1
Jammu and Kashmir	6	5	1
Jharkhand	14	14	0
Karnataka	28	27	1
Kerala	20	17	3
Madhya Pradesh	29	31	-2
Maharashtra	48	50	-2
Orissa	21	19	2
Punjab	13	13	0
Rajasthan	25	29	-4
Tamil Nadu	39	32	7
Uttar Pradesh	80	87	-7
Uttaranchal	5	4	1
West Bengal	42	42	0
Delhi	7	7	0

Source: Alistair McMillan, *Seminar* 506, October 2001.

The second major opportunity missed was to address the long term question of under-enfranchisement of the urban voter, especially the urban poor. Our system seems to have learnt little from the disastrous experience of the previous freeze in delimitation which resulted in monstrous constituencies like that of East Delhi with an electorate of over 30 lakh. Two steps were required to avoid the repetition of this experience. One, the time lag between two delimitations had to be reduced so as to allow for revision according to the latest population figures. The best solution would have been to go back to the original constitutional mandate of a fresh delimitation after every decennial census.

Two, for the intervening period reliable population projections could be used. Countries like Australia use the population projection method for this purpose. Our situation of rapid migration to urban areas demanded that we take both these steps; eventually none of the remedies were accepted or perhaps even considered. We can be fairly sure that the experience of East Delhi will be replicated in Gurgaon, NOIDA, Faridabad and dozens of other peripheries of urban centres all over the country, leading to a severe under-enfranchisement of the urban poor halfway through the period of the current delimitation.

The third major opportunity missed in the current exercise was to begin to think about addressing the under-representation of some communities. This is not an easy question to tackle. It is an established principle of delimitation that the boundaries should coincide with communities of interest as much as possible. The trouble of course is that 'communities of interest' can be defined in a variety of ways: geographically-defined communities or communities that share a common race, ethnic or tribal background, or the same religion or language. It is also well-known that once drawn, boundaries tend to perpetuate the identity that in the first place informed the boundaries.

While every political actor talks about these political communities all the time, we tend to maintain an official silence when it comes to formal political designs. The Sachar Committee report identified delimitation as a key to Muslim political representation. While the committee may or may not be right in suggesting that the delimitation is a possible cause for the under-representation of Muslims, this was a valid cue for thinking of delimitation as a possible solution.

There are various ways in which the existence of social communities may be taken into account while drawing the boundaries. We do not need to follow the American method of carving black majority constituencies. It is well-known that the political boundaries in the northeastern hill states mostly respect the boundaries of ethnicity. Instead of taking on this complex question and begin thinking of a way out, the Parliament and the Delimitation Commission chose to postpone this discussion by at least a quarter of a century.

The fourth and perhaps the biggest opportunity missed, in this instance by the Delimitation Commission, was its refusal to align the map of the first and the second tier of democracy to the third tier. We have a ridiculous situation of two unconnected political maps for the entire country – one for Lok Sabha and assembly elections and another for panchayat and municipal elections. Accordingly, we also have two parallel electoral rolls. This

situation was unavoidable immediately after the 73rd and 74th Amendment as the earlier delimitation could not have provided for this.

Now that we have the third tier, one of the principal challenges of the recent delimitation was to connect the two maps, just as the assembly and the Lok Sabha constituency maps are integrated. It required the Delimitation Commission to define the boundary of each assembly segment in terms of a group of panchayats or municipality wards. This is a matter of long term significance for political representation, for it would have ensured that panchayati raj functionaries could have a meaningful relationship to their MLAs. That could in turn create political incentives for pushing decentralization of political power.

There are good reasons to believe that the commission was aware of this challenge. Yet it is intriguing to see that the final order of the Delimitation Commission has persisted with the archaic practice of defining the assembly constituency in terms of revenue circle in one state, mandala or tehsil in another, and panchayat in yet another set of states. It is hard to believe that the commission found it difficult to muster the administrative support or the technical expertise to match the two set of boundaries. Clearly, the Delimitation Commission either found this question too trivial or too messy or allowed petty bureaucratic turf-wars to trump the larger requirements of democracy. A future historian of Indian democracy might find this decision of the first Delimitation Commission after the 73rd and 74th Amendment most inexplicable and disappointing.

As we come to terms and learn to live with the new delimitation, there is a danger that the infirmities of the new design might kickoff a blame-game. We get a glimpse of that in the manner in which the new delimitation order was discussed in the Lok Sabha, with more than one member wanting to blame the Delimitation Commission for some of the provisions which flow straight from the Delimitation Act passed by the Parliament. The commission may be pushed into a defensive mode, trying to pass on more than the due share of problems to the Parliament, the executive and functionaries like the Registrar General of Census. We are likely to lose sight of the big picture in this blame game.

If the reading suggested in this essay has any merit, some of the most serious flaws in the recent delimitation exercise flow not from the position that some of the key functionaries sitting in the Delimitation Commission or the Law Ministry or the Parliament happen to have taken, but from a paradigm that has come to dominate our thinking about designing and reforming politics in general and representation in particular. This is as true of the

Delimitation Commission as it is of the Law Commission, the Election Commission of India or of 'civil society' initiatives for democratic reform for that matter. These flaws affect the delimitation exercise as much as they affect the unending debates about political reservation for women. In conclusion, therefore, it may be more appropriate to reflect on some of the inadequacies built into this paradigm of thinking about representation.[19]

First, much of the existing thinking is marked by reductionism, by a reduction of the issue of representation to the social attributes of the representatives. This understanding begins by identifying representation as one of the key aspects of democratic practice for it concerns the political agenda which shapes the outcome of democracy. Representation of issues obviously requires an agency. Hence, the focus shifts from representation to representatives, to the exclusion of other institutions and forces that are no less decisive in the selection of the issues that get represented.

The next step in this reduction is to link the representative to the electors, for what the elected representatives do is linked to the control exercised by the electors. This leads to a suggestion that the link between the electors and the elected is one of resemblance, that the representative must mirror the social attributes of the population they seek to represent. From this it is a short step to the final reduction of social attributes into caste or community of the representative.

A non-reductionist approach to representation cannot and must not overlook the caste or community profile of the representatives. One cannot simply understand, for example, the way the Left Front in West Bengal has dragged its feet on the identification of the OBCs and extension of any benefits to them, unless one cares to dig and arrive at the figures of the disproportionate presence of the top three upper castes among the MLAs and the ministers of the Left Front. A non-reductionist approach would require that the chain that connects the representatives to the electors be established in each case rather than assumed and that other institutions and causal factors be taken into account.

Second, the existing approach to representation is marked by a near-complete inattention to the specificities of the mechanisms and devices that frame representation. There is a substantial literature in the discipline of political science, hidden from political scientists and political commentators in India, on the political consequences of electoral and political rules and institutions including comparative analyses of delimitation exercise in several democracies. Much of the Indian discussion about political institutions, laws and reforms tends to dismiss the exact question of framing as if it were an inconsequential matter, a small detail that can sort itself out and which is best left to some technicians. Many of the proposals for political reform operate at the

level of abstract normative concerns and often end up suggesting mechanisms which achieve the opposite of what was intended.

If this approach has landed the Delimitation Commission with a weak justification for the way it has decided the reserved (Scheduled Caste) constituencies for the Lok Sabha, the same inattention has led to a deeply flawed framing of the current Women's Reservations Bill. Given the state of the discipline of political science in our country and its lack of connect to the democratic process, it may be an undeserved compliment to either blame the discipline for this cognitive failure or to expect it to lead a recovery. What is required here is nothing short of a new discipline that seeks to understand the relationship between law, institutions and the political processes in a non-western setting. We cannot hope to address pressing but complex issues like the under-representation of Muslims without this kind of body of knowledge.

Third, like much of the discussion on political reforms, the thinking on political representation is at best non-political and often anti-political, characterized by a deep suspicion of political actors and disregard for the necessary requirements of democratic political competition. A perspective ill at ease with democracy seeks to insulate an exercise like delimitation, or review of the Constitution for that matter, from questions of political theory and from a reading of the journey of Indian democracy. This approach seeks to protect the people against their representative, views any increase in the number of representatives as nothing but a burden on the exchequer and gets alarmed at the panchayati raj representatives developing linkages with the MLAs and MPs.

Perhaps some complaints of the MPs and MLAs who were Associate Members of the Delimitation Commission about not getting a fair deal may be linked to this suspicion of political actors. A disregard for democratic political competition may partially account for the indifference to questions like freeze in the share of seats for various states and the under-enfranchisement of the urban poor.

The problem with this approach or paradigm is not just that it is mistaken. We are dealing with something more than a simple cognitive error here. This error is linked to equations of power and the social origins of those who hold this anti-political view. The ensemble of economy of truth, social origins of partial but dominant knowledge, and its connection with structures of power has a classical name: ideology. Any attempt to make sense of political representation in contemporary India is thus an ideological enterprise, particularly so when it

is not conscious of its own ideology.

Footnotes:

1. Pratap Mehta's *The Burden of Democracy*, Penguin, Delhi, 2003 is one of the few exceptions to this split. Niraja Jayal, *Representing India*, Macmillan, 2006 offers the most systematic and comprehensive evidence for under-standing the paradox. For another attempt to look at both sides of this paradox, see Yogendra Yadav and Suhas Palshikar 'From Hegemony to Convergence: Party System and Electoral Politics in the Indian States, 1952-2002', *Journal of Indian Institute of Political Economy*, XV (1&2), January-June 2003.

2. For an impressive collection of data and other information on the state of panchayati raj institutions, see The State of the Panchayats: A Mid-term Review and Appraisal, Vols 1-3, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, 2006.

3. For comprehensive figures on the changing social profile of Lok Sabha in terms of caste and religious background of elected MPs, see Niraja Jayal, *Representing India*. For a similar analysis of the social profile of MLAs, see Christophe Jaffrelot and Sanjay Kumar (eds.), *Rise of the Plebeians: The Changing Face of the Indian Legislative Assembly*, Routledge, Forthcoming. The entire data on the social profile of the MLAs will soon be put in the public domain by the CSDS-CSH-CERI.

4. See Ajoy Bose, *Behenji: A Political Biography of Mayawati*, Penguin/Viking, 2008 for an informative and fair account of Mayawati's rise to power.

5. Christophe Jaffrelot's *India's Silent Revolution*, Permanent Black, 2003 is the most persuasive yet nuanced and empirically rich statement of this position.

6. For some evidence of anti-incumbency in India see Yogendra Yadav, 'The Third Electoral System', *Seminar* 480 (a symposium on the state of our polity and the political system), August 1999.

7. See SDSA Team, *State of Democracy in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2008, for evidence concerning popular opinions on economic policies in the five countries of South Asia including India.

8. For a sample of such readings see Subhash C. Kashyap et.al. (eds.), *Reviewing the Constitution?* Shipra, Delhi, 2000. This kind of reading is scattered across in the editorial contents of the English media.

9. In 2004 Kuldip Nayar and Inder Jit had filed a case challenging The Representation of People (Amendment) Act, 2003 (No. 40 of 2003) which amended Section 3 of the Representation of People Act by substituting the words 'in India' in the place of 'in that State or territory' for purposes of eligibility for contesting for Rajya Sabha. The Supreme Court dismissed the petition in 2006.

10. The expression was used by the Bihar government for constituting a commission to look into the conditions of dalit communities that have not been able to take much advantage of reservations. This question has already come up with regard to sub-classification of SC quota for government jobs in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab.

11. The data in the report concerning the under-representation of Muslims in the parliament and state assemblies is based on the pioneering research by Iqbal A. Ansari in *Political Representation of Muslims of India: 1952-2004*, Manak, Delhi, 2006.

12. For a representative compilation of facts and views on this controversy, see Meena Dhanda (ed.), *Reservations for Women*, Women Unlimited, Delhi, 2008.

13. The declarations are now available on the Election Commission's website and the various websites of the Chief Electoral Officers in each state. Various 'Election Watch' organisations have come up with quick analyses of these affidavits. 'National Election Audit 1999', a study carried out by the CSDS and sponsored by the Election Commission arrived at similar conclusions about the economic background of candidates.

14. These include the Dinesh Goswami Committee, and the Indrajit Gupta Committee reports.

15. See the report of the parliamentary committee on reservations in higher judiciary cited in Niraja Gopal Jayal, op.cit., 2006. The social profile of the media is one of the least explored areas of research. A pilot survey of the 315 top journalists/editors across 38 newspapers/news channels in the national capital found that not one of them was from SC/ST and less than 10 per cent were from OBC/Muslims. Data set created by Anil Chamaria, Jitendra Kumar and Yogendra Yadav, CSDS Data Unit.

16. Most of the following discussion is based on the information provided in the official website of the Delimitation Commission www.delimitation-india.org. I would like to thank Justice Kuldeep Singh and N. Gopalswamy, Chairman and Member respectively of the Delimitation Commission, for an opportunity to have an extended discussion about all the major issues discussed here at the Election Commission on 25 February 2008. I would also wish to acknowledge my gratitude to Professor K.C. Shivaramakrishnan, Chairman CPR and clearly the one person who has thought most deeply about the delimitation exercise. Extended discussions with him have taught me a great deal.

17. For a useful summary of delimitation exercise in many democracies, see www. aceproject.org

18. Alistair McMillan analysed the implications of this freeze and made a very strong case for lifting it. See 'Population Change and the Democratic Structure', *Seminar* 506, October 2001.

19. Some of the following points are drawn from Yogendra Yadav 'A Radical Agenda for Political Reforms' *Seminar* 506 (Reforming Politics), October 2001.