

Paper: "Making of a populist government: A study of Karpoori Thakoor's regime." Mithilesh Kumar

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This abstract deals with an important subject matter in the political process of Bihar. The conceptualization is interesting and promises to interrogate some fundamental issues in the dynamics of politico-social life in contemporary Bihar. A few comments are being offered below in the spirit of suggestion to aid further in the conceptualization and execution of the paper:

Regime: the paper needs to conceptualize clearly what is a political regime as different from term of office or a social movement. Clearly, the paper hopes to argue that the Karpoori Thakur's term of office laid down some fundamental issues that anchor the political process of the State in years to come – what can be seen as creation of a political regime. Besides, what is the relationship between the term of office of an individual or a political dispensation and a regime. It is not clear why the text that will form the basis of this paper – 'Triveni Sangh Ka Bigul' – offers a good proxy for the processes being studied. Elucidation and elaboration is needed. The paper seems to presume that public morality explains the political process. No such relationship can be presumed to exist. A clearer argumentation needs to be made as to why the author privileges public morality as a central anchor in the political process. As of now, the linkages are presumed rather than explained. A related issue is that of the role of public reasoning, which arguably creates the frame of public morality, which in turn can be seen as the bulwark of the political process. Such an argument cannot be seen in this abstract, which will benefit by paying some attention to this matter.

The paper seems to be prioritizing the assertion of middle caste peasantry as a claim for social justice. While there is not fundamental issue either way in such a formulation, the rationale needs to be spelt out along with the relationship of which assertion to similar claims by the lower castes. It can as easily be argued that the political assertion by middle castes may create processes for denial of social justice to lower castes. And, can social justice be seen in such fragmentary terms? The paper will also need to pay attention to the caste-class continuum and fractures that are central on the political process of Bihar. The abstract claims that social justice is a child of the passive revolution. In the absence of delineation, this appears to be claim that is not easy to substantiate. The question remains open if Bihar underwent a passive revolution and if so, what are the alliances that emerged in the passive revolution. Given the continued dominance of the old order, is it fair to think of middle caste assertion as passive revolution. And, if so, that is the meaning of social justice on such passive revolution. In other words, what does this child look like in terms of family resemblances with the idea justice in procedural and substantive terms. The abstract does not adequately contextualize or conceptualize the Naxal violence in Bihar. It can be asked why is it a surprise that social violence expands in era of renegotiation of social contract – between societal groups and that with the state. Besides, if social justice is a mere governmentality, is it not apt tool to *create* surplus of violence for new caste-class order.