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Decode Politics: Who are the two Pasi icons invoked by new MP from Ayodhya in his oath

Pasis one reason for SP dealing BJP an upset in Faizabad, Awadhesh Prasad talks of 'Veerangana' Uda Devi, 'Maharaja' Bijli Pasi

Written by [Lalmani Verma](#)

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The Pasis make up around 7% of UP's Scheduled Caste population, making them the largest Dalit group in the state after the Jatavs. Prasad himself belongs to the Pasi community. (PTI)

While taking oath in the Lok Sabha earlier this week, Awadhesh Prasad, the newly-elected Samajwadi Party MP from Faizabad, invoked 'Veerangana' Uda Devi and 'Maharaja' Bijli Pasi, two prominent personalities of the Pasi (Dalit) community. Prasad himself belongs to the Pasi community, who number over three lakh in the Faizabad Lok Sabha constituency and who are believed to have voted en masse to elect him over his BJP opponent.

Who was Uda Devi?

Born in Ujirao, Lucknow, Uda Devi was part of the royal guard of Begum Hazrat Mahal of Awadh, and participated in the 1857 Mutiny. She is credited with having mobilised people to take up arms against the British.

On November 16, 1857, Uda Devi was among the soldiers who clashed with the British regiment stationed near the Gomti River in Lucknow. It is said that she killed at least three dozen British soldiers from atop a tree before she was spotted and killed.

On November 16 every year, events are organised to commemorate the martyrdom of Uda Devi at various places, mostly in central Uttar Pradesh. She remains an icon

especially for the Dalits.

Who was 'Maharaja' Bijli Pasi?

The stories of Bijli Pasi are popular among the Pasis of central UP districts such as Lucknow, Rae Bareilly, Barabanki, Bahraich, Sultanpur and Allahabad.

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While there are many prominent Pasi faces from here such as brothers Daldev, Baldev and Kakoran, Bijli Pasi is among the most prominent, having ruled over some parts of UP in the medieval period. The ruins of the fort from where he ruled still stand in Lucknow, while a statue has been put up of the Pasi icon in the state capital.

The [Yogi Adityanath](#)-led [BJP](#) government in UP has announced plans to renovate and redevelop Bijli Pasi's fort as a tourist destination.

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How significant are the Pasis?

The Pasis make up around 7% of UP's Scheduled Caste population, making them the largest Dalit group in the state after the Jatavs. While the Pasis also have significant presence in other states, their largest population is in UP.

In the recent Lok Sabha polls, in a boost to the SP that is largely seen as a Yadav-Muslim-centric party, five Pasi candidates fielded by the SP won, compared to three of the BJP.

Earlier, the community was largely seen as a supporter of the BSP. As the BSP's base increasingly shrunk and became confined to the Jatavs, the community shifted its allegiance to the BJP, prompted by the BJP's aggressive wooing of SCs.

How has the SP managed to woo over the Pasis?

Apart from Faizabad, Pasi candidates fielded by the SP from Mohanlalganj, Kaushambi, Machhlishahr and Lalganj Lok Sabha constituencies won in the recent polls. R K Chaudhary, who raised the demand to replace the sengol sceptre in Parliament with a replica of the Constitution, is the SP's Mohanlalganj MP. The win from Faizabad was the sweetest for the SP as the constituency includes Ayodhya, the site of the grand Ram Temple inaugurated by Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) earlier this year.

As part of its efforts to expand its base among the Pasis, the SP has been organising a programme at its headquarters on the death anniversary of Uda Devi, to honour her contribution during the 1857 revolt.

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Mithai Lal Bharti, president of the SP's Dalit outfit Samajwadi Babasaheb Ambedkar Vahini, said that the party has always honoured great personalities of all communities when in power, including Uda Devi and Bijli Pasi. If the SP returns to power in UP, more steps will be taken in this direction, Bharti said.

BJP's waning vote-bank

The SP's Chaudhary won from Mohanlalganj defeating another prominent Pasi face, former Union minister Kaushal Kishore of the BJP.

Kishore claimed that the SP had managed to win Pasi support courtesy "false propaganda" on the Constitution and reservations. The INDIA parties said that if the BJP returned with a brute majority, it would change the Constitution and take away reservations.

Jai Prakash Rawat, the new BJP MP from Misrikh, said, "After taking oath, I too had raised the slogan "Pasi samaj ki jai". I spoke about all Pasis. He (Awadhesh Prasad)

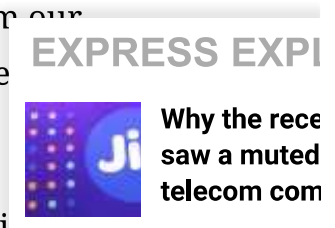
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only mentioned the names of Uda Devi and Bijli Pasi, possibly to send some message. We (BJP) too respect both icons. There are more great leaders from community. If I had taken all of their names, it would have taken more time mentioned the entire Pasi samaj instead.”

Rawat also accepted that the number of Pasi MPs of the BJP has fallen this time, adding that anti-incumbency could be a factor behind this.



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The three Pasi leaders of the BJP who won the recent Lok Sabha elections are Ashok Kumar Rawat (Misrikh), Jai Prakash (Hardoi), and Kamlesh Paswan (Bansgaon). Paswan has been made a Minister of State (MoS) in the Union government.

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