

**THE TWO JANATA EXPERIMENTS :  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "THE TWO JANATA EXPERIMENTS : A COMPARATIVE STUDY" submitted by Mr. KUMAR RAJESH, is in partial fulfilment for the Degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree in this or any other University and is his original work to the best of our knowledge.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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**K.R.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Achin Vanaik believes that "since 1970s Indian political system is in irreversible transition to a new order whose topography has still to be properly surveyed".<sup>1</sup> Concentrating on one aspect of Indian polity, in its party system, the changes start becoming visible in 1960s itself, though attaining a discernible shape only in 1970s. Congress monopoly in the Indian party system has been progressively weakening since the second half of 1960s, and four major milestones may be located during the movement in this direction, till the present. The Congress dominance in the Indian party system till mid-1960s was challenged for the first time by Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, who dreamt of a unified opposition, replacing the Congress at the Centre, and came very close to achieving it in 1967 parliamentary elections when Congress could barely maintain its majority at the Centre, while it was reduced to a minority in more than half a dozen states.<sup>2</sup> The Congress dominance was given a severe shock for the second time, when Jayprakash Narayan (J.P.) gave a call for 'total revolution' in 1974-75, followed it up with a popular mass movement, and paved the path for the imposition of Emergency which was finally clamped in June 1975. The third blow to the Congress dominance was the most decisive, when a non-Congress government was sworn in at the Centre, following the March 1977 parliamentary elections. Some scholars like Ram Joshi and Kirtidev Desai rushed to conclude the inauguration of the 'Two Party Domi-

nance Model' in the Indian party system.<sup>3</sup> While a permanent two party system did not emerge, a viable potential for a Congress-alternative at the Centre did become a reality. That the rise of this potential represented a definite change in the party system, and not merely a time specific knee-jerk reaction, was substantiated when the Congress dominance received the fourth major jolt in form of the second non-congress government at the centre in December, 1989.

This dissertation attempts to present a comparative study of the two more decisive of these four sign-posts on the way of the diminishing Congress dominance -- 'the two Janata Experiments of 1977 and 1989'. This is not to negate the fact that the Lohia's efforts and the J.P. movement remain crucial to the understanding for these two significant political events. These changes were also closely related to the changes in the power-equations within the Indian Society, i.e. the rise of the rich and middle peasantry as a force to reckon with.

The first chapter deals with the first Janata Experiment (1977-80). It has been observed that the rise of Janata Party to power at the centre, was the outcome of a multi-causal, long drawn process. The way the heterogeneous ruling elite had been functioning since independence, the Lohia's efforts at opposition unity, the cracks in Congress and its progressive de-institutionalisation since late

1960s, the process of opposition unity beginning 1967, the J.P. movement, and finally the Emergency as the immediate cause, collectively culminated in the rise of the first non-Congress government at the centre after the March 1977 parliamentary elections. This way, for the first time a viable potential for a congress-alternative, that had remained elusive earlier, became a reality. Then the chapter proceeds to analyse how the performance of the Janata Party government was not very encouraging, at least on political front. While on the political front, its performance was dismal as it underwent an ignominious disintegration, its performance on the governance front was relatively better, specially in the wake of stifling emergency experience.

The second chapter traces the effective presence of the Janata-factor in the realm of Indian polity between 1980-87. It tries to explain how the potential for a Congress alternative, that had emerged in the second half of 1970s, was sustained between 1980-87, instead of withering away.

The third and final chapter analyses the second Janata Experiment (1987-90). It perceives that the changes that had set-in the Indian polity and society since late 1960s, and 1970s had taken roots by the second half of the 1980s -- the aggressive political assertion of the middle and rich peasantry, the de-institutionalisation of party system, the plebiscitary nature of politics and elections, etc .... As such, while the rise of Janata Party government was preceded



by relatively greater political upheaval (the J.P. movement, the Emergency ...), the birth of the National Front government in 1989 did not require an equally acute labour-pain. It has been noticed that the two Janata experiments are not the two isolated occurrences of the Indian Polity, but are the off-shoots of the same sequence of changes in polity and society noticeable since late 1960s and early 1970s. The chapter also reviews the performance of the short-lived Janata Dal led government, between December 1989 to October 1990.

Lastly, there is the conclusion, which draws certain inferences from the comparative study of the two Janata experiments. The Congress dominance in Indian Party System is, more or less, a matter of the past. While this change has brought in relative political instability, it has also created an outlet, other than the Congress for the realisation of people's political aspirations. The possibility of another non-Congress government at the centre can not be ruled out in future.

The **methodology** used, has been primarily historical-analytical. At the same time, given the very nature of the topic, it has also been descriptive, at times. The **delimitation** of the topic is at the Central-level. The State-level analysis, where-ever used, has remained subsidiary to the central theme.

## NOTES

1. Achin Vanaik, The Painful Transition : Bourgeois Democracy in India, London, Verso, 1990, p.99.
2. See, The Interviews with Mr. George Fernandes, and Mr. Madhu Limaye (exclusive for this dissertation), Appendices.
3. Ram Joshi and Kirtidev Desai, 'Towards a More Competitive Party System in India', Asian Survey, November 1978.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE FIRST JANATA EXPERIMENT : 1977-80

Thirty years after independence, Indian polity witnessed the first of the two Janata Experiments which continued for less than three years. The fact that the second Janata experiment materialised within just over a decade of the collapse of the first one<sup>1</sup> hints at the presence of a viable potential for a Congress-alternative at the centre since 1975. An evaluation of the non-Congress parties (primarily those constituting the Janata Party) between 1977-90, while substantiating this view, adds that the potential for a Congress - alternative having emerged, all that was needed was a genuinely convincing issue for mobilising the masses - be it the Emergency, symbolising Mrs Gandhi's authoritarian tendencies, or corruption at high places, manifested in the 'Bofors-Deal' -- which may be used to transform this potential into reality. The first and the second Janata experiments lie at the beginning and the end of this evaluation. Apart from the lesson to lessen the purely selfish pursuits of political interests, the comparative study of the two Janata Experiments also reflects the changes in priority of the central governments in accordance with the democratic aspirations of the people. While the Janata Party (1977-79) dismantled the authoritarian state - apparatus of the previous government, and paid special attention to the rural and agricultural sector:<sup>2</sup> the Janata Dal (1989-90) shared central power with regional

forces <sup>3</sup> and attempted to give a better deal to the middle castes.<sup>4</sup>

Hence the first Janata Experiment (1977-80) marks a watershed in the Indian party system in particular and the Indian polity in general. The former, because a viable potential for a Congress-alternative had emerged, and the latter, owing to greater possibility of the realisation of the democratic aspirations of the people through it, as this chapter would suggest.

This chapter deals with the first Janata experiment in two parts -- first, dealing with the rise of Janata Party culminating in the first non-Congress government at the Centre, and secondly, an analysis of its performance during its tenure in power at the Centre.

### **The Rise of Janata Party**

Pranab Bardhan expresses the common view that the "miscalculation of an ill-informed dictator and the good common sense of the mass electorate resulted in the unexpected restoration of political democracy."<sup>5</sup> At the other extreme of the spectrum of opinions is the view of V.S. Naipaul <sup>6</sup> which is rather fanciful and conjectural. He feels that the Emergency, being a symptom of the inadequacies of the Hindu psyche, used to a thousand years of defeats and withdrawals, now left alone with the blankness of

a decayed civilization, unable to cope with the stresses and strains of modernization, resulted in what was inevitable. Amidst the variety of opinions about the rise of Janata Party in 1977, it is important to try and understand how, actually, it came about? Was it merely the rejection by the Indian electorate of the Emergency policies, and an overwhelming response to the Jayprakash Narayan (J.P.) led movement? Or is there something more to it than what meets the eye at first sight?

An attempt to understand such questions related with the rise of Janata Party in 1977 is made below. First, the socio-economic background of Janata ascendancy is noted. Then, there is an assessment of the cracks in Congress, apparent since late 1960's. Next, some light is thrown on the J.P. factor that was there. Finally, the emergence of Janata Party, primarily in relation with the efforts towards opposition unity, is traced.

Pranab Bardhan rightly notes that in 1950s and '60s the country was, effectively, governed by a loose coalition of interest groups of a few industrial and business houses, rich farmers, (mainly) urban professionals, as well as political middlemen.<sup>7</sup> Unlike most of the developing countries this ruling section in India has not been a solid monolithic block. It is a heterogeneous group where internal bargaining occurs. For instance, bearing the brunt of direct taxes the industrialists and professionals resent the

near non-tax status of the rich farmers, industrialists dislike the 'licence-quota-raj' of the bureaucrats, while rich farmers are not amused by the industrial protection given by the governmental policies. As always, the brokers - including a large number of M.P.s and M.L.A.s - thrive amidst such complicated 'bargaining counters'. As one of its major functions, the political democracy defines the rules of negotiations within the ruling - coalition, adds Burdhan.

He further elaborates that the heavy costs of operating within this framework started becoming apparent, say, by late '60s and early '70s. Little surplus was left in the economy for re-investment after sharing of the spoils by the heterogeneous coalition. Huge budgetary subsidies for maintaining high support prices for farm products, and lower-price public distribution system to pacify the vocal urban consumers, were resorted to. Public sector produced capital goods and intermediate goods for private agricultural and industrial finance, and to support export.

Political democracy also has its ways of building and keeping up pressures for state subsidies -- through sections of unionised workers, clerks, small traders, regional pressures on federal money, urban unemployed and their occasional alliance with underworld bosses, rising costs of expanding police and para-military forces. These growing costs and subsidies had taken a heavy toll on public savings

potential leading to serious decline in the growth of real investment by the public sector. The same had remained conveniently cushioned by the substantial foreign aids till around mid-sixties. Relative stagnation in private industrial production was also apparent. These were compounded by the chronic problem of low effective demands for industrial products and services in an economy where vast majority of consumers, largely rural, remain abjectly poor. The question of an earnest attempt to seriously tackle this massive poverty did not arise, as it would involve such thorough organisational and institutional restructuring which may threaten the very foundations of power of the ruling elites.

This was the crisis to which the ruling coalition responded, at first slowly in early 1970s, and rapidly later with an increasingly authoritarian government. Even some partners in ruling coalition were somewhat chastened, for e.g. salaried class including bureaucrats. Political process was curtailed and wings of political middlemen were clipped. Instead of defining the rules of bargaining, the political democracy transformed itself as the supreme arbiter in conflict resolution. The following observation is rather apt : "Indian polity is reputed to have copied democracy in the British style where there is a sovereign parliament and a nominal monarchy; but such were the exigencies of its power elite that by the middle of 1970s India had a virtual monarchy (complete with its Crown Prince) and nomi-

nal parliament."<sup>8</sup>

In a country of continental dimensions and diversities, such as India, it was doubtful that such a highly centralised and personalised decision-making system would have a long and smooth sailing. Even for the partners of ruling coalition the outcome of policy decision became more uncertain and less predictable -- specially for the loosely mobilised and regionally diffused sections such as rich agricultural interests.<sup>9</sup>

Pranab Bhardhan correctly infers that given the nature of Indian society and the divergent partners in its ruling coalition, political democracy, mainly due to its impersonal rules of negotiations, demand articulation, and bargaining, has a better chance of keeping the partners within some moderate bounds, as compared to authoritarianism. This was vindicated in March 1977, though with a slight re-orientation of the ruling elites.

Narrower than society is the arena of polity, and the two are inextricably interwoven. Certain changes in the Indian party system since 1960s are also relevant for understanding the Janata current which emerged in the second half of 1970s.

The cracks in Congress which lay dormant under Nehru's charismatic spell, appeared on the surface during the evening of his life. Co-relating it with the previous



analysis (it was also the time when in the wake of Cuban - Missile Crisis, the cold-war had given way to the first detente, or 'competitive co-operation', -- Hotline and Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) agreements between USA and USSR ) the earlier scenario where India could maintain the flow of foreign aid from both the blocks by remaining pragmatically non-aligned, and thus cushion her highly subsidised economy, appeared to be fast changing.

The Kamraj - Plan, the growing importance of the Syndicate<sup>10</sup> after Nehru's death and its crucial role in the selection of both Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi as Prime Ministers, are just a few examples of the cut-throat intra-party rivalries which brought Congress to such a pass that 1967 general elections (with the opposition broadly united under Lohia) presented a formidable challenge to the Congress supremacy in the country for the first time since independence.<sup>11</sup> In the elections Congress lost majority in eight states and could barely maintain the same at the Centre. The 'one party dominance model' phase was replaced by 'coalitional model' phase (1967-71) of the Indian party system.<sup>12</sup>

More than twentyfive state coalition governments were formed between 1967-71. On her part Mrs. Gandhi initiated the phenomenon of getting rid of unfriendly state governments with impunity. Congress suffered several splits in various states during this period.

For opposition parties - Socialists (Lohia), Bhartiya Kranti Dal, Jan Sangh, Swatantra - these coalition experiments were a mixed bag of success and failures.<sup>13</sup> At that turbulent juncture these near prophetic words of a 'syndicate' members, S.K. Patil are worth taking note of : "for a democracy to be effective, the ruling parties must change and such a development depends upon the evolution of a two party system which would take more than a decade to come into being."<sup>14</sup>

In 1960s, the two wars - 1962 with China and 1965 with Pakistan - had done Indian economy no good; and rather unequal socio-economic structure, specially in the rural areas, were further complicated by the consequences of Green Revolution in late 1960s. Rather chaotic situation in the country demanded drastic actions. All these provided rationale for the seemingly drastic but actually populist measures and socialist rhetorics used by Mrs Gandhi since she came to power. This, at the same time, also helped her in silencing her critics and cutting the opponents to size within the Congress. By then the all-powerful 'syndicate' was replaced by the subservient and yet consequential 'kitchen - cabinet'.<sup>15</sup>

Following the Presidential elections on August 16th, 1969 (in which Mrs Gandhi put her own candidate, V.V. Giri against the party's official candidate, Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy), and Morarji Desai's sacking (He was Deputy Prime

Minister with the 'Finance' portfolio) in the wake of Bank Nationalisation, things came to boil. On 11th November, 1969 Congress split vertically as Mrs. Gandhi was expelled from the Party. Thus Congress (O), dominated by erstwhile 'syndicate' and Desai on one hand, and Congress (R) headed by Mrs. Gandhi came into being.<sup>16</sup>

It was this Congress (O), which later, as a constituent of Janata Party happened to supply both the Prime Minister and the President during the first Janata experiment. Incidentally, one of the key-actors of the second Janata experiment Mr Ram Krishna Hegde had also parted ways with Mrs. Gandhi, as a close confidant of Nijlingappa, during the same 1969 split.

The Congress split of 1969 consolidated the two alliance patterns at the national level - one right of the centre and the other left of the centre. As such, the 1971 elections (in which Mrs Gandhi was returned as P.M. with a massive majority), saw, for the first time, a polarised clash between the Congress and its allies on one hand, and the Grand Alliance (constituting most of the non-communist opposition parties) on the other. Some scholars<sup>17</sup> feel that but for the total fiasco of the Grand Alliance in 1971, India would probably have entered the two party situation as early as 1971.

If one asks about the single biggest contribution by any individual towards the rise of Janata Party, the credit

should fairly enough, go to Jayprakash Narayan, popularly known as 'Loknayak', or shorter still, J.P.

For a proper understanding of the 'J.P. Movement' (1973-75), let us briefly try to trace the evolution of his philosophy on which his call for 'total revolution' was based.<sup>18</sup>

In the first phase of evolution of his philosophy, J.P. was enamoured by Marxism, and shared much in common with other like minded leftists - Acharya Narendradev and Lohia.

The revolutionary J.P. of younger days, became a thinker in the second phase of evolution of his philosophy. He became critical of Marxism, specially its over-emphasis on class struggle in the light of the multiplicity of social process. He emphasised communitarian social context and moral force to present his 'communitarian socialism' having triple hierarchy of - community (village based), Regional Community, and 'Rashtra' (or State).

He, then, plunged himself in 'Sarvodaya-Andolan', 'Bhumi-Dan', 'Gram-Dan', etc....<sup>19</sup>

In the early 1970s when Congress government was being equated with authoritarianism, and corruption was rampant, evolution of J.P.'s philosophy entered its third and most crucial phase, when he felt the need for a struggle for socialism.<sup>20</sup> Thus he gave the call for 'total revolution' for the total transformation of society from top to bottom.

This was meant to realise the Gandhian dream of 'Swaraj' by

using the Gandhian methods for the same. His total revolution involved three steps -

1. Drastic change of government.
2. Drastic transformation of society - doing away with various unequal social relations, exploitation, bonded labour etc...
3. Transformation of every individual - developing power to control oneself, and ability to direct oneself to some positive causes.

This also had five contexts -moral and spiritual, environmental, economic, political, and cultural and educational.

So, from 1973 onwards when he started putting his philosophy of struggle for socialism into practice, he often asked the masses, including the youth (mainly), civil servants, police, as well as para-military forces to start disobeying authoritative orders of the governments, thereby embarking upon the Gandhian techniques of non - co-operation and civil-disobedience.<sup>21</sup>

In December 1973 J.P. addressed an open letter to the Members of Parliament drawing their attention to two issues - first, relating to the fundamental rights of the citizen, and the independence of the judiciary, and the second concerning with political and administrative corruption. In

early 1974 J.P. inspired the 'Nav Nirman Samiti' of students agitating for the removal of corrupt state government in Gujarat and dissolution of the State Assembly.<sup>22</sup> While meeting the students, teachers and Sarvodaya workers in Gujarat, in February 1974, he urged the students to be the watchdogs for assuring a decent living to the people. He appealed to college students to give up their classes for a year and work for a 'youth revolution'. But as J.P. moved to Bihar, which was demanding immediate attention, students returned back to classes, leaving behind the President's rule on the one hand and leadership - vacuum on the other. J.P. regretted that the constructive programme for people's upliftment under 'Nav Nirman Samiti' withered away after the assembly dissolution.

In Bihar, the student leaders launched their movement against mal-administration, rising prices and corruption on 18th March 1974.<sup>23</sup> J.P. had already been contacted. While remaining apprehensive due to the Gujarat experience, as in Gujarat, J.P. appealed to students to leave colleges for a year and dedicate themselves to the task of evolving organs of people's power from village upwards. On 18th March there were pitched battles between the mammoth crowd seeking to 'gherao' the legislature, and the police. In the ensuing melee, hooligans set ablaze many places including the offices of the newspapers 'Searchlight' and 'Pradeep', as police reached late.<sup>24</sup> According to official accounts at least three people were killed and over fifty injured in

police firing.

Repression continued, as police fired on peaceful demonstrators in Gaya on 12th April killing eight people and injuring fifteen.<sup>25</sup> J.P. was particularly shocked by the government's refusal to institute an objective enquiry. Over 50,000 people welcomed J.P. at the Gaya railway station on 16th April, and in front of 2,00,000 at the Gandhi Maidan he declared his total lack of faith in the government. Prior to Gaya tragedy on 8th April he had led a silent procession of peace-marchers in the state capital, described as 'Five Miles of Silence'.

On 5th June,<sup>26</sup> "nearly half a million people marched to Raj Bhawan under the leadership of Mr Jayaprakash Narayan to present to the Governor, Mr. R.D. Bhandare, two million signatures in support of the demand for the dissolution of the Bihar Vidhan Sabha."<sup>27</sup> Daily 'Satyagrah' in front of state legislative assembly began in mid June. A three day 'Bihar-Bandh' was observed against repression. The massive show of state-coercive apparatus against the intended 'mahagherao' of 4th November, under Chief Minister Abdul Gafoor's leadership supported by the CPI, was a moral victory for J.P.<sup>28</sup> By then the middle and lower classes, the small peasants, and the landless labourers were solidly behind him. Renowned Hindi novelist. Phanishwar Nath Renu, renounced his 'Padmashri'.

The high point of the movement was the unprecedented rally of 6th March 1975 at Boat Club in Delhi to present a 'Charter of Demands' to the parliament.<sup>29</sup>

Much disenchantment had set in all around, specially among the middle class. Rising prices, growing inflation, and the multiplicity of unemployment compounded it. Salaried class was worst hit. Strikes, gheraos, and lock-ups had become the order of the day, more important among them being -- the famous 'Swadeshi Cotton Mills' strike in Kanpur in 1973, involving 10,000 workers, the All India Railway strike 1974 etc... All these uprising and unrests lent tremendous force to the J.P. movement.

Some Congress leaders -- like Chandra Shekhar, Mohan Dharia, -- attempted reconciliation between J.P. and Mrs. Gandhi, which offended the latter and Dharia was sacked in the process from central ministry.<sup>30</sup>

Results of both Assembly elections in Gujarat, held on 9th and 10th June 1975 in which the Congress lost, and Allahabad high court judgment<sup>31</sup> disqualifying Mrs Gandhi's election on 12th June came as rude shocks to Mrs Gandhi. The central question was one of survival in power and not merely fighting the opposition forces. The press was near unanimous that she should step down from Prime Ministership. Even the names of Siddharth Shankar Ray, Swaran Singh, Jagjivan Ram, Y.B. Chauhan etc...<sup>32</sup> kept cropping up as contenders in Congress inner circles, in case Mrs Gandhi obliged. She didn't.



On 24th June 1975 Supreme Court, rejecting her appeal for absolute stay of high court order, granted only conditional stay. <sup>33</sup> Five opposition parties - Congress (O), Jan Sangh, Bhartiya Lok Dal, Socilaist Party, and Akali Dal met at Desai's residence in J.P.'s presence, and resolved to launch a countrywide stir demanding P.M.'s resignation, on 25th June. On 26th morning the Indians woke up in the chains of Emergency, which was clamped when they were fast asleep. <sup>34</sup>

Most of the non CPI opposition leaders were arrested under MISA (Maintanance of Internal Security Act). A complete censorship was imposed. 'Twenty Point Programme' directed towards the weaker sections, and in effect, meant to counter the opposition was launched. It was primarily the common experiences of reeling under emergency repression, of all non-CPI opposition parties all over India, that acted as the major cementing force in bringing them together. A series of amendments and ordinances strengthening Mrs. Gandhi's position were passed by the parliament which was, by then, neither responsible nor responsive.

Having dealt with the J.P. factor and the main events related to the movement for 'total revolution' which he led, it becomes easier to trace the emergence of the Janata Party, as the unified party of the opposition.

One may trace the emergence of Janata Party back to the Grand Alliances of 1967 and 1971, specially the former, when the

various opposition parties broadly agreed to contest the parliamentary elections under Lohia's leadership.<sup>35</sup> This may rightly be called the beginning of coming together of opposition parties. More precisely, the beginning of the process of the merger of opposition parties into one started with the inception of Bhartiya Kranti Dal (B.K.D.), when Charan Singh broke away from congress to form his ministry in U.P. (Uttar Pradesh) in 1969, with the help of other opposition parties. B.K.D. projected itself as the party for opposition unity.

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Charan Singh had been voicing the concerns of middle peasantry within Congress which had, at best, remained a peripheral interest group within the ruling coalition.<sup>36</sup> As the crisis within the ruling elite deepened by late sixties (as noted earlier), by the virtue of Green Revolution these middle peasants gained substantially in both economic and social power, and they were no more satisfied with their peripheral role.<sup>37</sup> They wanted to be at the centre of the bargaining process among the ruling elites. Finding it impossible to do so in the existing ruling set-up, they ventured out to create a new ruling-coalition on their own. Formation of B.K.D. may be seen in this light (along with the motivations of an intensely ambitious leader).<sup>38</sup>

During the 'coalitional period' of 1967-71 various opposition parties - B.K.D., Jan Sangh, Socialist Party, Samyukta Socialist Party, Swatantra Party, Congress (O)....



- were too busy forming and breaking alliances towards opportunistic goal of power, to think seriously in terms of opposition unity or merger.

It was only after the sound drubbing of the 'Grand Alliance' at the hands of Congress (R) in 1971 parliamentary elections, that serious attempts began in this direction. The first major breakthrough was the merger of Bhartiya Kranti Dal, Samyukta Socialist Party (A faction), Socialist Party (a faction), Uttakol Congress, Rashtriya Loktantrika Dal, Kisan Mazdoor Party and Punjab Khetibari Zamindari Union to form Bhartiya Lok Dal (B.L.D.) in mid 1974.<sup>39</sup> Prior to that, in 1973, Biju Patnaik, of Uttakal Congress then, had invited J.P. to lead a unified front of the opposition parties. J.P. had politely declined the 'crown'.<sup>40</sup>

The J.P. movement acted as crucial catalyst of opposition unification in which B.L.D., Jan Sangh, Congress (O) and Socialist Party worked hand in hand.<sup>41</sup> The 'Janata Morcha'<sup>42</sup> of opposition was triumphant in June 1975 Gujarat Assembly elections, giving further impetus to the move. Congress (O) and Jan Sangh had reservations about complete merger and suggested a federal party instead.

Then came the 'Emergency' and the common experiences of governmental atrocities and the days in jails spent together had a great cementing effect. As Raj Narain put it, like Sri Krishna Janata Party was formed in the prison. Announcement of election was so sudden (on 18th January.

1977) and election's date so close (20th March), that the formalities of total merger could be completed only in May 1977, with Chandra Shekhar (one of the two Prime Ministers in the second Janata Experiment) as its first President. Meanwhile on 2nd February 1977 Jagjivan Ram, H.N. Bahuguna, and Nandini Satpathi had resigned from Congress with their supporters and had formed Congress for Democracy (CFD), which also merged with Janata Party later. With the electoral victory of Janata Party in March 1977 elections a Congress alternative at the Centre became a reality, but not necessarily the J.P.'s dream of a 'total revolution', because the philosophy behind this which J.P. had in mind (and which has been taken note of earlier in the chapter) was never put into practice.

So, it may be inferred that the replacement of Congress by Janata Party at the Centre was, actually the product of a long drawn process propelling Indian polity in a particular direction since independence, and specially since 1960s.<sup>43</sup> Along with the crucial contemporary factors -- the J.P. movement for a 'total revolution', and the stifling of democracy and atrocities perpetrated under emergency -- it was also an inevitable product of the manner in which the Indian ruling elite had been haggling over, bargaining, and sharing the spoils of democracy since independence; the coming to force of intra party dissections and rivalry within Congress in 1960's resulting in its split in 1969 and de-institutionalisation; and in the wake of it; also the

move towards opposition unity accompanied by simultaneous shift in social bases from Congress to the opposition beginning 1967 general elections. Precisely because it was no knee-jerk reaction (as is generally felt), but a culmination of the factors over past few decades, the Indian party system acquired a new shape in 1977 -- by attaining the viable potential for a Congress alternative at the Centre. As a further analysis of the parties involved, till 1990, and a comparison of the two Janata Experiments would show, this new shape had come in Indian polity to stay.

## Janata Party At The Centre:

Coming to power at the Centre and becoming the Congress alternative was one thing, and continuing in that capacity for the full term was something different altogether. This was proved in no uncertain terms by Janata Party government between 1977-80. Whether it was able to deliver the goods to the people, and if yes, how much, is yet another issue.

Now, this section of the Chapter firstly touches upon the intra-party clashes for leadership on political front culminating in its disintegration; and then gives an analysis of the performance of Janata Party on governance front.

Attainment of governmental power had paradoxical effect on Janata Party. It resulted in its consolidation <sup>44</sup> as well as in sowing the seeds of disintegration and decay. While formalities of merger were completed and the party's organisational structure actually emerged after its electoral victory, many social groups also pooled in to derive benefits. At the same time the March 1977 triumph also intensified inter-group rivalries in the party. In a period of a little over two years, the latter was destined to decisively off-set the former.

While the party was given a new organisational structure with Chandra Shekhar, the forty nine year old former 'Young Turk' as its president; the major act of political consolidation (knitting together the divergent political

forces) was the appointment of the Council of Ministers by Prime Minister, Morarji Desai. It carefully reflected the various political forces that had banded together within the Janata Party.<sup>45</sup> Jagjivan Ram and H. N. Bahuguna represented erstwhile Congress for Democracy in the Cabinet. Charan Singh, the BLD leader, became Home Minister. Atal Behari Vajapayee, one time leader of the Jan Sangh parliamentary party, was made Minister of External Affairs. H.M. Patel, a civil servant turned politician who had joined the Swatantra party, was made Minister of Finance. Mohan Dharja, a 'Young Turk' who had resigned from the Congress party in support of Jayaprakash Narayan, was brought in to take charge of the Ministry of Commerce. George Fernandes, the Socialist trade unionist, was placed in charge of the Ministry of Industries. L.K. Advani, President Jan Sangh and General Secretary of Janata Party on the eve of the elections, was appointed Minister of Information and Broadcasting.

Conspicuously absent from the Cabinet were any prominent figures from South India. The Cabinet consisted primarily of leaders from Uttar Pradesh, but included members from Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh and a single figure from Kerala.

Dissensions were visible in the party right from the outset, when on 20th January, 1977, four non-communist parties - B.L.D., Congress (O), Jan Sangh, and Socialists - agreed 'to work as one party', called Janata Party. There

was much bickering as to who would be its Chairman ? While Charan Singh refused to accept Moraji Desai or anyone else except himself as the head, the general consensus seemed to be veering around Moraji Desai. Ultimately 'Vajpayee - formula' that was accepted had two main planks. Firstly, Moraji Desai and Charan Singh were to become Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the party, with the latter enjoying final authority in so far as allocation of tickets in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Himachal, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, U. P., Bihar and Orissa was concerned. Secondly, (and importantly) the issue of leadership was to be decided only after the polls. L.K. Advani was made General Secretary for the election period.<sup>46</sup>

Having achieved the common goal of replacing Congress at the Centre the next major round of inter-group rivalries emerged during the claims and counter-claims for the top post. After much conflict under the surface, impelled by a long standing dislike for Jagjivan Ram, Charan Singh shot a letter to J.P. favoring Morarji Desai.<sup>47</sup> J.P. was given the unenviable task of naming the P.M. designate in consultation with all concerned. He named Morarji Desai. Thereafter the internal rivalries and conflicts which began, stopped only after the total disintegration of the Janata Party government at the Centre by the second half of 1979.

The simplest of categorisation of Indian society may be between 'Upper Castes' (e.g. Brahmins, Kashtriyas...),



'Middle Castes' (e.g. Yadavas, Kurmis, Reddies, Kammas...) and the 'Lower Castes' or Harijans. While each of the political groups and political parties swear in the name of the 'weakest among the weaker sections'; among the various constituents of the Janata Party, Bhartiya Lok Dal led by Charan Singh represented the middle castes, Jagjivan Ram symbolised the Harijan's aspirations, Jan Sangh primarily the urban middle class, and Congress (O) the upper castes (constituencies of Jan Sangh and Congress O often overlapped). Though not implying any water-tight compartmentalisation, this was roughly the scenario of social interests within Janata Party, which must be kept in mind while discussing the more visible and crucial factor of the personality clash among the central leaders of the Party. which led to its undoing.<sup>48</sup>

It is no secret that each of the three elderly leaders Morarji Desai, Jagjivan Ram, and Charan Singh had seen the March 1977 Janata victory as a genuine possibility for realising their desire (if not dream) of becoming the Prime Minister. While Morarji succeeded, the other two eagerly awaited to grab the first available opportunity. The others, A.B. Vajpayee (First one), Chandra Shekhar, (Forty nine), L.K. Advani (fifty), Mohan Dharia (Fifty two), George Fernandez (forty seven)<sup>49</sup> etc... were either relatively younger or politically junior to lay their claims for the Prime Ministership, and remained contented in playing secondary roles in the subsequent personality clashes. As both

Moraji Desai and Jagjivan Ram had almost same groups in the Janata parliamentary party to bank on for support,<sup>50</sup> Jagjivan Ram came into the picture to take on Charan Singh only when Moraji Desai resigned from the leadership on July 27, 1979. On the other side was Charan Singh, pinning his hopes for support on his erstwhile BLD friends and also some socialists.

First public manifestation of this personality - clash between Morarji Desai and Charan Singh was the episode involving Kanti Desai (between March 11 to 27 1978). Barely a year had passed since they had pledged at Rajghat, Gandhiji's Samadhi, to remain united in the fulfilment of the party's objective. Mr. Desai had reportedly made a statement in Bhavnagar offering to have an enquiry instituted at the alleged charges of corruption against his son Kanti Desai. Charan Singh promptly dispatched a letter to Mr Desai, seeking an immediate inquiry (while Mr Desai had sought some minimum ground for the same), and the letter also 'leaked' to the Press. Morarji Desai also shot back a not very polite rejoinder. Though a compromise was later reached, public vilification between the top two leaders greatly damaged government's reputation. 51

On 29th May, 1978 from his sick bed in All India Medical Sciences, Charan Singh issued a statement decrying Government's economic policies saying that once again the levers of power had passed on to the capitalists and heavy

industrialists.<sup>52</sup> It was an attack simultaneously on Morarji Desai, on Finance Minister, H.M. Patel, and on Industries Minister, George Fernandes. Objections to the statement were raised on the ground of the concept of collective responsibility.

Proverbial last straw on the camel's back was the statement issued by Charan Singh on 28th June 1978 evening indicting the government for its "failure to put the former Prime Minister behind the bars by now". People thought "that we in the government are a pack of impotent people who cannot govern the country," he added.<sup>53</sup> On 29th June, in the morning, Prime Minister Desai called an emergency meeting of the Cabinet at his residence. Those present, including H.N. Bahuguna, Biju Patnaik and George Fernandes,<sup>54</sup> authorised Mr Desai unanimously to take proper action against both Charan Singh and Raj Narain. The latter had also been consistently airing grievances against his own party colleagues publicly. Both were dropped from the Cabinet.

Personal interests have often proved to be as important as the party interests or social interests. So, though Charan Singh's former BLD colleague and the then Chief Minister of Haryana, U.P., Bihar, and Orissa -- Devi Lal, Ram Naresh Yadav, Karpooi Thakur, and Nilamanic Rautray respectively -- wished that he be taken back in the government, but they were not ready to sacrifice their chair for him. As a matter of fact, there was no immediate threat to

the government in the wake of Mr. Singh's sacking.

This situation started changing fast as the final act of the 'Drama' began on 24th January 1979 when Charan Singh was re-admitted into the Cabinet for the sake of party unity as the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister. Raj Narain felt humiliated that inspite of much persuasion he was not given a re-entry into the Cabinet and vowed to "teach Desai a lesson".<sup>55</sup> By then the double-membership issue involving R.S.S., the 'secular nationality'<sup>56</sup> question, was fast becoming the centre of intra party conflicts. These were also having divisive ramifications in the seven Janata ruled states,<sup>57</sup> where a precarious balance between the former BLD and Jan Sangh members was sustaining the survival of their governments. Having lost all interest in the unity of the party, Raj narain started working single-mindedly towards destabilising and finally dislodging the Desai Government. As simultaneous attempts were made to bring down the 'BLD Chief Ministers', Devi Lal, Ram Naresh Yadav, and Karpoori Tkahur, apparently at the behest of 'Desai Camp', these C.M.s also started actively mobilising M.P.s for defecting from the Janata Party. Not at all pleased with the treatment meted out to Charan Singh and Raj Narain, and may be also for not having been persuaded enough to join Desai's Ministry, Madhu Limaye also lent his support to the realisation of Charan Singh's desire of becoming the Prime Minister.

As the monsoon session of Parliament began on July 9th, 13 Janta M.P.s resigned from the Party. Y.B. Chavan, new Leader of Opposition moved a no-confidence motion against the government. Defections from Janata Party started snow-balling. Finally, Prime Minister, Morarji Desai resigned with his Cabinet on 15th July 1979.<sup>58</sup>

A unique political arrangement of convenience was solemnized between Janata (Socialist) under Charan Singh, which had broken away from Janata Party, and the Congress, as Charan Singh was sworn in as the Prime minister and Y. B. Chavan, as the Deputy Prime Minister on 28th July.<sup>59</sup> On 19th August AIADMK also joined the ministry.

This opportunistic alliance could not last long as Congress withdrew its support Charan Singh resigned with his Cabinet on 20th August 1979 to become the first Indian Prime Minister who didn't face the parliament. Incidentally, 20th August was the day Parliament was convened for Charan Singh to prove his majority on the floor of the house.

President Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy, in his own wisdom, used his discretion and dissolved the Lok Sabha, as recommended by Charan Singh on 22th August, thus refusing to accept Jagjivan Ram's claim to form the government by being the leader of the single largest party with 203 members. Thus, another Parliamentary elections were imposed upon the country within less than three years.

Compared to the dismal show of lack of unity on political front, the performance and efficiency of Janata Party on governance front at the Centre was relatively better. The very first measures of the Janata government were intended to restore practices and institutions that had fallen into disuse in the last few years of Mrs Gandhi's tenure, even before the declaration of the emergency.<sup>60</sup> Censorship was ended and a commission was appointed to propose ways of making 'Samachar', the news agency formed in 1976 by the government act out of four previously existing agencies, independent of the government. The Prime Minister's secretariat, which had become a political arm of the Prime Minister and had grown independent of (and a rival to) the Cabinet Secretariat, was reorganised by Morarji Desai, and restored to its pre-1964 position. The Chief of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the intelligence organisation that provided the Prime Minister with political intelligence, resigned and was replaced by the head of the Intelligence Bureau, the agency normally responsible for political intelligence and internal security.<sup>61</sup> Six hundred officers of RAW were relieved of their duties and sent back to positions in the states. In various other departments the minister's officials who had worked closely with the former Prime Minister, and her associates who were responsible for some of the worst excess were also removed or transferred.

The government launched investigations into the alleged criminal activities of key associates of Indira Gandhi, and

Bansi Lal, the former Defence Minister, and several others were subsequently arrested. A commission of inquiry was instituted, under former Supreme Court Chief Justice Shah, to conduct a wide ranging inquiry into acts committed during the Emergency.<sup>62</sup>

Revenue intelligence which had been effectively removed from the control of the Finance Minister and taken over by the Prime Minister's secretariat, resumed its normal functioning. The supersession of judges, and other departures from established procedures for the appointment and transfer of judges came to an end.

Most of the provisions of the Forty Second Amendment were repealed by the Forty Fourth Amendment. Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) was scrapped. Art. 352 of the constitution under which emergency may be proclaimed on the ground of 'internal disturbances' in the country was amended. The phrase 'internal disturbances' was replaced by 'armed rebellion'.<sup>63</sup>

Janata Party manifesto of 1977 was titled "Both bread and Liberty: A Gandhian Alternative". It declared that "Bread cannot be juxtaposed against liberty. The two are inseparable."<sup>64</sup> Towards ensuring 'liberty' it took swift and decisive steps mentioned immediately above. In its effort towards 'Bread' too, it can not be denied some credit, as we shall see just below.

The economic policies of the Janata Party government were surprisingly coherent, keeping in mind the heterogeneous conglomerate that the government was. Rural development oriented and labour intensive plan for 1978-83 that the government had envisaged by 1978, allotted more than 40 percent (\$ 60 billion of \$ 145 billion) to agriculture and rural development, an increase of over 100 percent over previous five years, while increase for organised industry was only 30 percent.<sup>65</sup>

To accelerate rural development, the government adopted its 'antyyodoya' scheme to provide self employment for the poorest families in the identified 'problem-village', a 'food -for-work' programme to provide employment for the rural unemployed, government support for village and small scale industries, and a variety of block level development projects.<sup>66</sup> As per a planning commission estimate those scheme increased rural employment by 5 million.<sup>67</sup>

Considerable new resources were invested in agriculture, particularly in expanding the country's irrigation capacity, increasing the amount of irrigated land by 2.5 million<sup>68</sup> hectares. There was also a growth in institutional credit, which led to a considerable increase in fertiliser use, from 19 lakh tones in 1977 to 45 lakh tones by 1979. Foodgrain output was remarkable - 126.4 million tones in 1977-78 and 131 million tones in 1978-79. India's foreign exchange reserve was further strengthened (over \$ 6 billion



in May 1978, and a record \$ 2.3 billion from AidIndia consortium for 1978-79).<sup>69</sup>

Compared to earlier years, growth rate was very good  
:70

1971-72	- 0.9 %
1973-74	+ 2.9 %
1974-75	- 1.0 %
1975-76	- 1.6 %
1977-78	up by 5.2 %
1978-79	Industry + 8.0 % Agriculture + 4.0 %

Inflation containment was more remarkable:

Years	Rise in Wholesale Price Index (1970-71 = 100)
1976-77	12% rise
1977-78	Down from 182.1 (March 1977) to 181.7 (March 1978)

In spite of an acceptable economic performance and restoration of democratic governmental apparatus,<sup>71</sup> it was the internal politics in the Janata government which undermined its performance on the whole.

This way, while disintegrating under the weight of its own disparate elements, the Janata Government of the Centre did respond to the democratic aspirations of the masses - by dismantling the Emergency apparatus and re-vitalizing the institutions rendered dysfunctional earlier, on one hand, and envisaging to shift the priorities towards the rural agricultural sector,<sup>72</sup> on the other. Whether, and if yes, how far was it successful is a different issue.

Thus, the first chapter brings into focus the two new realities of the Indian Polity -- first, that with the rise of the Janata Party to power at the centre, a viable potential for a Congress-alternative had emerged in the Indian party system, and secondly for the first time since independence peoples democratic aspirations had found a new outlet, an outlet different from Congress, the Janata Party, which could respond to those popular demands which had gone unheeded under the Congress of late. That the change in the Indian party system was no flash in a pan, will be clear as we analyse the non-Congress political forces between 1980-90 and compare the two Janata Experiments in the next two chapters.

## NOTES

1. Charan Singh resigned as the Prime Minister on 20th August 1979, marking the end of the first experiment, and V.P. Singh was sworn in as the Prime Minister on 1st December, 1989.
2. Marcus Franda, Small is Politics : Organisational Alternatives in India's Rural Development, Wiley Eastern Limited, 1979.
3. Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), Telgu Desam (TD), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), and Congress (S) - the constituents of 'National Front' were partners in the coalition government at the Centre.
4. Mandal - Commission's implementation, providing for reservation in governmental jobs, flaring unprecedented controversy.
5. Pranab Bardhan, 'Authoritarianism and Democracy : First Anniversary of New Regime', Economic and Political Weekly (EPW), March 18, 1978.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Charan Singh and Devi Lal, in the two Janata Experiments, respectively, were to represent these very, rich agricultural interests.

10. P.K.Jain., Glorious Revolution in India : An Analysis of Historical Foundation, New Delhi, Gitanjali Prakashan, 1978, Chap. 11 elaborates how Congress was fast loosing its ground in 1960s, and the role played by the 'syndicate' in the same. Nijalingappa, Kamraj, Atulya Ghosh, S.K. Patil, Sanjeeva Reddy etc... acting as the Centre of power were collectively known as the sundicate.
11. Madu Limaye, Birth of Non Congressism : Opposition politics, 1947-1975, Delhi, B.R. Publications, 1988. Lohia's efforts at opposition unity have been given prominence in the book.
12. Ram Joshi and Kirtidev Desai, 'Towards a More Competitive Party System in India', Asian Survey, November, 1978. They traced the emerging party system in independent India in following four categories :
- i) One Party Dominance Model (1947-67)
  - ii) Coalition Model (1967-71)
  - iii) Second, One Party Dominance Model (1971-77)
  - iv) The Two Party Dominance Model (1977 Onwards).
13. See Appendices, Madhu Limaye's interview, (Exclusive for this dissertation). He views that between 1967-71, disunity in congress was reflected in Opposition's disunity.

14. S.K.Patil Quoted by Dr P.K.Jain, Glorious Revolution.... Ibid.
15. An extra-constitutional group close to Mrs Gandhi, comprising of Jagjivan Ram, Fakhuddin Ali Ahmed, Dr Swaran Singh and K.K. Shah... among others,
16. Congress (Organisation) and Congress (Ruling).
17. Ram Joshi and Kiritdev Desai.Ibid.
18. Ajit Bhattacharya, 'Jayaprakash Narayana 1,2,&3', Illustrated Weekly of India, 26th January, 2nd February, and 9th February, 1975. A Brief life sketch of J.P. presented.
19. Total-Upliftment, Land-Charity, Village-Charity etc.... respectively. J.P. had responded to the call given by Vinoba Bhave.
20. Minoo Masani, J.P. : Mission Partly Accomplished, Macmillan India Ltd.,1977. Studied with personal touches it provides a detailed and interesting description of J.P. movement of 1970s, and also J.P. and his philosophy.
21. Searchlight (Daily), Patna, 20th August 1974, p-6, No-tax drive launched in Bhojpur. Indian Nation (Daily), Patna, 24th August 1974, p. 1, J.P.'s call for Paralyse-Administration - Stir. Amrit Bazar Patrika (Daily), Calcutta, 28th August 1974, p. 1, Complete

Gandhji's revolution : J.P. Indian Nation (Daily), Patna, 30th August 1974, p. 1, J.P. Offers to go on Indefinite Fast.

22. The Assembly was ultimately dissolved in the wake of the fast undertaken by Moraji Desai.
23. Mino Masani, Ibid.
24. 'Searchlight' and 'Pradeep', the two dailies from Patna, in English and Hindi respectively, had consistently been taking anti-government stand.
25. Though barely seven years of age, the researcher still vividly remembers the horrific blood stained portions of 'Gautam - Buddha - Road' in Gaya, his home town. A few were shot-at-sight during the curfew which followed.
26. On 29th April J.P. had been operated upon at Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore. Hence, he was out of the agitation for over a month.
27. The Times of India, Delhi, 6th June, 1974. He was embarking upon the notions of Referendum and Recall, which have not been provided for in the Indian Constitution.
28. Searchlight, Patna, 5th November, 1974, p. 1, Lathi Charge and Tear Gassing in Patna, J.P. injured, Dharna Peaceful.

29. Indian Nation, Patna, 7th March, 1975, p. 1, J.P. Leads Mammoth March to Parliament.
30. Searchlight, Patna, 5th March, 1975. p.6 J.P. Attacks P.M. for Dharia's dismissal.
31. Statesman, Calcutta, 13th June 1975. p.1, Mrs. Gandhi's election set aside. P.M. barred from holding elective office for 6 years. Two charges of corrupt poll practices upheld. Judge stays order for 20 days. Raj Narain, the loosing candidate from Rae Bareiley had filed the case.
32. Indian Nation, Patna, 17th June 1975, p.1, J. Ram stakes claim as Mrs Gandhi's successor.
33. Indian Nation, Patna, 25th June, 1975.
34. Indian Nation, Patna, 27th June, 1975.
35. Both Madhu Limaye & George Fernandes (in exclusive interview for this dissertation) attach great importance to the '1967-Experiment' in providing a backdrop for the 1977-Experiment. See, Appendices.
36. Paul R. Brass, Caste, Faction, and Party in Indian Polity, Vol II, Delhi, Chanakya publications, 1984. He deliberates upon the rise of middle peasantry, for instance, in relation with western U.P., and the Charan Singh factor.

37. Prem Shankar Jha, India: A Political Economy of Stagnation, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1980. He views that it is the rise to dominance of an intermediate class or a stratum consisting of market-orientated peasant proprietors, small manufactures, traders and other self-employed groups, which benefitted from 'economic stagnation' and had a vested interest in its perpetuation.
38. L.K. Advani, The People Betrayed, Delhi, Vision Books, 1979. He emphasises Charan Singh's ambition rather than the caste-factor for the turn of events towards and during the first Janata Experiment.
39. C.P. Bhambhri, The Janata Party: A Profile, Delhi, National Publications, 1980, See Chapt. 1
40. Minoos Masani, Ibid.
41. Indian Nation, Patna, 11th April 1974, Pg.1 Four opposition Parties Support Students.
42. L.K. Advani, The People Betrayed, Ibid. pp. 64-65.
43. Andre Gunde Frank, 'Emergence of Permanent Emergency in India; EPW, March 12, 1977. He links the state of Indian polity in late 1970s to the crises in Indian Industry, and governmental policies, since independence.



44. C.P. Bhambhri, Ibid. p. 44. He writes "The Janata Party would have withered away from the Indian scene without its victory in elections."
45. Myron Weiner, Indian At the Polls: The parliamentary Elections of 1977, USA, AEI Publications, 1978, Chap. 8.
46. L.K. Advani, Ibid. p. 17.
47. Morarji Desai, Jagjivan Ram, and Charan Singh were the three contenders for the top slot.
48. See Appendices, Madhu Limaye's interview. Ibid.
49. Myron Weiner, India At the Polls:..., Ibid. Chapter. 8.
50. Their former Congress-Colleagues of Congress (O) and Congress for Democracy, and more importantly, one of the two biggest groups in Janata Parliamentary party, the Jan Sangh.
51. L.K. Advani, Ibid. p. 25.
52. Ibid. p. 26.
53. Ibid. p. 12.
54. These gentlemen were among the prominent supporters of Charan Singh when the party finally split in July 1979.
55. See Appendices, Madhu Limaye's interview, Ibid.

56. Ibid.
57. Four out of the seven Janata Chief Ministers were from the former BLD -- Devi Lal (Harayana), Ram Narxesh Yadav (U.P.), Karpoori Thakur (Bihar), and Nilmani Rautroy (Orissa); while the three were from the erstwhile Jan Sangh -- Shanta Kumar (Himachal Pradesh), Bhairon Singh Shakhawat (Rajasthan), and Kailash Joshi (Madhya Pradesh).
58. A Janata Party Publication, The Betrayal, August 9, 1979.
59. Ibid.
60. See, Seminar, May 1977 issue, titled 'Correctives'.
61. Inder Malhotra, 'The Intelligence Agencies: Need for Effective Supervising', The Times of India, 14th April 1977.
62. India Today, June 1977, January 1978, June 1978.
63. Article 352 has, since, been amended again in late 1980s to include "armed rebellion or internal distrurbances threatening the unity and integrity of India".
64. The Janata Party Manifesto, 1977.
65. Marcus Franda, Small is Politics ..., Ibid. p. 10.

66. Ibid. p. 13. Small farmers were also introduced to allied agricultural activities as forestry and conservation, fisheries, animal husbandry, horticulture and cottage like industry - the so called 'tiny sector'.
67. Raj Krishna, 'The Economic Malaise', Seminar, Dec 1979 pp. 42-45.
68. Myron Weiner, Indian At the polls 1980 : A study of Parliamentary Elections, Munshirram Mancharlal publs, New Delhi, 1984, p. 13.
69. Marcus Franda, Ibid. p. 8.
70. L.K. Advani, Ibid., Chapt IX.
71. In foreign policy too, India's relations had shown improvement with the Big-Powers as well as the neighbours.
72. Marcus Franda, Ibid. p. 10.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**THE JANATA CURRENT IN INDIAN POLITY**  
**BETWEEN 1980-87**

The Janata current implies the continuous stream of those political forces which had joined hands in 1977 to replace the Congress at the Centre, in the landscape of Indian polity between 1980-87.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the current had shrunk in its intensity ( in terms of the loss of popular support), and had branched off into various sub-currents. Yet, the fact that it continued to exist, facilitated that crucial back-drop which interacted with a variety of factors between 1987-89 to culminate in the second non-Congress government at the Centre.

In fact, had it not been the extraordinary circumstances (in the wake of the shocking assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi ) in which the December 1984 parliamentary elections were held, it would not have been surprising if Congress had failed to maintain its majority in light of the electoral challenge posed by the Janata forces (primarily consisting of Lok Dal, the Bhartiya Janata Party, and the Janata Party ) which had consolidated themselves politically since 1980.<sup>2</sup> By September 1983, the Janata Party, The Congress (S), the Democratic Socialist Party, and the Rashtriya Congress had formed a new alliance called 'United - Front.' On the other hand, the BJP and the Lok Dal had already constituted their 'National Democratic Alliance'.<sup>3</sup>

While Chandra Shekhar was the head of the former, the latter was under the joint leadership of Charan Singh and Atal Bihari Vajepai. Given the scenario where the Congress government at the Centre between 1980-84 had not performed spectacularly enough to capture the electorate's imagination, <sup>4</sup> it was quite likely that the two alliances, having closed in their ranks towards the common objective of replacing the Congress, would have been successful once again.

As such, it is the perpetuity of the Janata current between 1980-87, keeping the potential for a Congress alternative alive, that is sought to be examined in this chapter. Prior to that Mrs. Gandhi's ascendancy back to power is traced briefly.

In early January 1980, Mrs. Gandhi staged a remarkable return to power. The rationale behind her triumphant comeback is not difficult to understand. Between March 1977 and August 1979, as the Janata government kept moving towards self-destruction progressively, Mrs. Gandhi had been gaining her lost ground slowly but steadily. Ironically it was the Janata Home Minister, Mr Charan Singh's act of over enthusiasm, which inaugurated her march back to prime-ministership. On his instructions Mrs. Gandhi was arrested on 3rd October 1977, only to be released by the court because of the lack of evidence for her detention.<sup>5</sup> The government was embarrassed, while people sympathised with their former prime minister who had been a victim of Janata government's vin-

dictive actions, in their eyes. On her part, Mrs. Gandhi had already started her endeavor of winning back the people. In September 1977, eleven persons belonging to the weaker sections were killed in the village Belchi in Bihar by the influential sections of 'Kurmi' caste.<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Gandhi's Belchi visit, atop the elephant 'Moti', as the village was marooned, was widely reported. Sitaram Kesari described it as another Dandi-March, while she was hailed by the slogans like - 'Adhi Roti Khayenge, Indira Ko Bulayenge' (we shall eat half bread, but call back Indira).<sup>7</sup>

As the definite slide of Janata government towards disintegration had already begun by mid-1978,<sup>8</sup> Mrs. Gandhi re-entered the Lok Sabha, after the lapse of 598 days, in November 1978 from Chikmangalur in Karnataka.<sup>9</sup> Soon faction leaders of Janata government started playing into her hands. Raj Narain's confabulations with Sanjay Gandhi were an open secret. Finally, by making and un-making the Charan Singh's government in July - August 1979, she virtually ensured her return to power which materialised in January 1980.

The return of one party dominance of the Congress in the 1980 Lok Sabha masked some fundamental changes that had taken place in India's politics.<sup>10</sup> First, there had been a significant shift in the regional distribution of party support. This had resulted in the Congress party, which had traditionally relied on its disproportionate support in

the 'Hindi - Heartland', moving towards a 'southern strategy'.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, the minorities block support to the Congress could no more be taken for granted.<sup>12</sup>

It is this unreliability of support from 'Hindi Heartland' and the minority block for Congress, specially since mid 1970s,<sup>13</sup> which provided a crucial clue to the possibility of a non-Congress government at the Centre, materialising twice since mid-1970s.<sup>14</sup> This also helps in examining the manoeuvrability of the Janata forces between 1980-87 because its constituents have their support base primarily in the North.<sup>15</sup>

Within a few months of Mrs. Gandhi resuming the prime ministership in January 1980, the various political forces that had merged to form the Janata Party in 1977, had virtually regained their pre-1977 identities. In the process, it was proved that the 'dual membership' issue involving R.S.S. that rocked the Janata Part Government, was clearly more than a 'non-issue'.<sup>16</sup> From the Right to the Left spectrum the prominent opposition parties were -- the Bhartiya Janata Party (New name for the old Jan Sangh), the Congress - U (Jagjivan Ram soon joined it), the Janata Party (left with erstwhile Congress - O and a section of the Socialists), the Lok Dal (under Charan Singh's leadership), the CPI, and the CPI (M).<sup>17</sup>

Mrs. Gandhi had returned to power on the slogan for a 'government that works'. In the first few months the

government never really worked. It was understandable when 180 Congress M.P.s owed total allegiance, not to the Prime Minister, but to her son, Sanjay.<sup>18</sup> Hardly 50 M.P.s were loyal to the Prime Minister, while the rest were potential defectors and conspirators. As a cruel flight of destiny, when Sanjay died in a plane crash on 23rd June 1980,<sup>19</sup> conditions in Congress were further complicated. The point is that the Congress (I), in spite of being the ruling party, did not really emerge as a formidable cohesive political party. As such, the Opposition remained a force to reckon with in the first half of 1980s, and hence it is relevant to trace their presence during this period.

A great opportunity came the opposition's way to evolve a joint-front against Congress (I) in mid 1980 Assembly elections in nine states.<sup>20</sup> Incidentally, Haryana Assembly was not dissolved due to the transmogrification of its Janata Chief Minister, Bhajan Lal, into a Congress (I) Chief Minister as he switched over sides with the entire legislative party -- seemingly, in anticipation of the change in the popular mood!<sup>21</sup> This opportunity for the Opposition to join hands in the Assembly elections was lost as factionalism prevailed upon political pragmatism. Congress (I) won in eight out of nine states - winning handsomely in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Orissa, and not so handsomely in Maharashtra, Bihar and Punjab.<sup>22</sup> It lost in Tamil Nadu. Hence Mrs. Gandhi remained the only credible leader.<sup>23</sup>



If a six party front against Congress (I), proposed by Devraj Urs in 1980 remained paralysed, it was mainly due to the opposition leader's (of centrist parties) fear of Jan Sangh (then BJP)/RSS, and of the CPI/CPI(M). This was similar to the mutual inhibitions between the Socialists and the Jan Sangh in 1960s and to an extent in 1970s.<sup>24</sup> Yet the effective rallying of political support would involve the cadre based parties of both the Right and Left (as was later vindicated in the second non-Congress victory in 1989). The point generally missed by the centrist parties is that the rigid ideological parties of BJP/RSS and CPI/CPI (M) variety lose their inflexibilities as they seek relevance in the continental complexity of India.<sup>25</sup>

While BJP held an impressive convention in Bombay in December 1980,<sup>26</sup> Janata Party had its Annual Session at Sarnath in January 1981. Atal Bihari Vajpai and Chandra Shekhar were re-elected as the Presidents respectively.

In mid-July 1981 the leaders of the major Opposition parties met in new Delhi for the first time since the break up of the Janata Party on a common platform on the issue of electoral reform.<sup>27</sup> Though they never really came together as a united political force at the centre between 1980-87, such symbolic joining of hands over specific issues occasionally had its importance in sustaining the Janata current.

Meanwhile, in July 1981 itself, the three small constituents of the Janata forces -- the Democratic Socialist Front (H.N Bahuguna), the Janavadi Party (Chandrajeet Yadav), and the Socialist Party (or whatever was left of it ) merged together to form a new party called Democratic Socialist Party .<sup>28</sup>

In the July of the same year came the ruling of Election Commission, recognising the party led by Indira Gandhi as the Indian National Congress, and derecognising the Congress (U) led by Devraj Urs as a national party.<sup>29</sup> Congress (U) promptly split into two in August and the group headed by Jagjivan Ram formed a new Party called the Rashtriya Congress. Soon K.C. Pant, member of Rajya Sabha and a former Minister resigned from the primary membership of the Congress (U) party. Finally, Devraj Urs having submitted his resignation from the Presidentship of Congress (U), Sharad Pawar was elected as its new President in October 1981, as it was, then, called the Congress (S).

In November, the same year the opposition leaders came together twice, though on two different issues.<sup>30</sup> First, was to appeal to the leaders of Assam Movement to continue the dialogue with the government in a constructive spirit, and the second, to urge the President for an enquiry into the Garhwal re-poll postponement. H. N. Bahuguna was the joint candidate of the Opposition from the Garhwal Lok Sabha constituency.

Towards the end of December 1981, BJP announced that its merger with any other opposition party was out of question.<sup>31</sup> BJP was to stand by this statement for the greater part of the 1980s, giving a new orientation to the politics of the non-Congress parties, which was different from that of 1970s - in the sense that the merger of all non-Communist Opposition parties into one was ruled out.

The Opposition was seen standing united once again in January 1982. Four major non-Communist Opposition Parties - the BJP, the Lok Dal, the Janata Party, and the Congress (S) - appealed to the Prime Minister to convene an all party meeting to evolve a national consensus on growing atrocities against the persons belonging to the schedule castes.<sup>32</sup> On 19th January the opposition parties organised an industrial strike, which was partially successful. In the resultant euphoria about a united opposition, it was announced that the Lok Dal, the Janata Party and the Congress (S) would merge into a new party, though it soon proved to be a non-starter.

The united convention of opposition parties was organised in Chandigarh in April 1982, which stressed the need for a political alternative.<sup>33</sup> Even as Lok Dal was trying hard to keep the party united,<sup>34</sup> the Janata Party, the Congress (S), and a faction of Lok Dal adopted a resolution to contest the coming elections with a common strategy. The elections to four State Assemblies and by-election for some

Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats were held in May 1982.<sup>35</sup> While in Kerala, West Bengal, and Himachal Pradesh, the Congress (I) led United Democratic Front, the CPM led Left Front, and Congress (I) Ministries were formed, respectively, without any hitch, Haryana results presented interesting results. Both Bhajan Lal (Congress I) and Devi Lal (Lok Dal led opposition Front) were equally sure of forming the government in Haryana. The Governor invited Bhajan Lal, who finally managed together a thin majority. The Janata current was making its presence felt.

Within a few months after the May 1982 state Assembly election, the Lok Dal underwent a major split.<sup>36</sup> Devi Lal, the Haryana leader, was expelled from the Lok Dal on 29th July and three party secretaries also resigned the same day. On 5th August the Lok Dal parliamentary party split with the removal of George Fernandes and Ram Vilas Paswan from the posts of Deputy Leader and Chief Whip respectively by the Party's General Body. Within a few days Karpoori Thakur was elected as the President and George Fernandes the general Secretary of the break away group of Lok Dal. In January 1983 this Lok Dal (Karpoori) merged with the Janata Party.

In each of the three states - Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tripura - where Assembly elections were held in January 1983, non-Congress governments were formed. N.T. Ramarao (Telgu Desam), R.K. Hedge (Janata Party), and Nipen Chakraborty (CPI-M) were sworn in as the Chief Ministers respectively.<sup>37</sup>

The year 1983 proved to be quite eventful for the Janata forces.<sup>38</sup> Janata Party President, Chandra Shekhar, came up with an ingenious idea of mass contact by embarking upon a six month 'padayatra' from Kanyakumari to New Delhi. It began in January and ended at 'Rajghat' in New Delhi in June. It was quite successful. The Chief Minister of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Pondicheery formed a Council for Southern Region, which was, in effect, also a non-Congress Council. Yet another non-Congress political force emerged when 'Rashtriya Sanjay Manch', a new political party was launched by Maneka Gandhi in April. The non-Congress (I) Chief Ministers and fourteen opposition leader held a meeting at Vijayawada in May for co-ordinating their activities.

The non-Congress opposition also seemed to be settling down into two loose alliances in 1983.<sup>39</sup> In August the Lok Dal and the BJP decided to form a National Democratic Alliance (NDA), and a joint block in the parliament and the state assemblies. Atal Bihari Vajepai was elected the Chairman of the NDA, and Charan Singh the Chairman of Co-ordination Committee and the leader of the NDA in the Lok Sabha. In September the Janata Party, The Congress (S), the Democratic Socialist Party and the Rashtriya Congress formed a new alliance called the United Front. Janata Party President, Chandra Shekhar was elected its Chairman. Yet, when the three day Opposition Parties conclave was organised in Srinagar in October the NDA decided to keep away inspite of

repeated invitations. Clearly the urge to unite was not yet strong enough.

At the same time the constituents of the two alliances joined hands at the state level when the need arose. In January 1984 the National Executive of the BJP decided in Indore to continue supporting the Ram Krishna Hedge government in Karnataka.<sup>40</sup> Just a few days later the Kranti Ranga (Urs Group) in Karnataka declared its merger with the ruling Janata Party. Later, the same year, in November, the Kranti Ranga (Bangarappa Group) merged with Congress (I) unconditionally. In January the fourth opposition conclave was held in Calcutta.<sup>41</sup> It approved a three point action plan to compell the central government to accept its eleven point demand.

Trends of both unity and division among the Janata forces continued in 1984.<sup>42</sup> While deputy leader of Janata Parliamentary party Subramanyam Swamy was removed from the party and he later formed a new party (the Hindustan Praja Party), and the BJP vice President, Ram Jethmalani resigned from the party post; five opposition parties --- The Democratic Socialist Party, The Congress (S), The Rashtriya Congress and Janavadi Party --- decided to merge together into a new party under Jagjivan Ram. Meanwhile, as Dr Farooq Abdullah government in Jammu and Kashmir was toppled, leaders of six opposition parties collectively protested to the President of India against it, in July. Similarly in

August fourteen Opposition parties' leaders presented a memorandum to the President against the arbitrary removal of N.T. Ramarao from Chief Ministership of Andhra Pradesh.

As the parliamentary elections (to be held by the year end) were approaching, fresh initiatives at opposition unity began.<sup>43</sup> In August the Lok Dal, the Janata Party, and the Congress (S) decided to contest the parliamentary elections jointly under Charan Singh's leadership. But the following month, as the Lok Dal leader, Charan Singh, said that he would accept nothing short of one leader, one symbol, one flag, one manifesto, and one party for the unified opposition; the Janata Party President, Chandra Shekhar, rejected the demand for the merger of all non-Communist Opposition parties, the very next day. As the attempted merger of smaller opposition parties under Jagjivan Ram had not materialised, on 21st October some of the same smaller parties, the Democratic Socialist Party and the Rashtriya Congress actually merged together with the Lok Dal and the Janata Party dissidents, forming Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party (DMKP) at the behest of Charan Singh and H. N. Bahuguna. Exactly ten days later came the horrific assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, and the entire arrangements, adjustments, and calculations towards non-Congress unity went haywire when riding on the crest of the sympathy wave, Rajiv Gandhi was swept to Prime Ministership in the December 1984 parliamentary elections.<sup>44</sup>

The year 1985 and 1986, the first two for Rajiv as Prime Minister, witnessed the addition of a new dimension to the non-Congressism. While the four national opposition parties -- the BJP, the DMKP, the Congress (S) and the Janata Party (with mere 2, 3, 5 and 10 seats respectively in the Lok Sabha )<sup>45</sup> -- were gasping for breath and trying to recover from the astonishing electoral rout; the regional parties were beginning to play increasingly consequential role in the non-Congress politics. Telgu Desam was the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha with 30 seats.<sup>46</sup> The state assembly elections which followed in 1985-86 consolidated this trend. N. T. Ramarao (Telgu Desam), R. K. Hegde (Janata Party), NarBahadur Bhandari (Sikkim Sangram Parishad), Surjit Singh Barnala (Akali Dal), Prafulla Kumar Mohontha (Asom Gaua Parishad), and Laldenga (Mizoe National Front) were sworn in as the Chief Minsiters of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Sikkim, Punjab, Assam, and Mizoram, respectively, during these two years.<sup>47</sup> These regional parties were to play decisive roles at the Centre politics in the years which followed.

As far as the national opposition parties were concerned - DMKP retained its earlier name, Lok Dal, and its symbol in April 1985, Chandra Shekhar was elected the President of Janata Party for the tenth consecutive year in April 1986, while Jagjivan Ram and Raj Narain, two prominent actors in the first Janata -Experiment passed away in July and December 1986 respectively.<sup>48</sup>



This chapter has traced the flow of Janata current in Indian polity chronologically between 1980-87. It was by the virtue of the presence of this current that the possibility of realising the potential of a Congress alternative at the centre did not wither away after the return of Congress to power at the centre in 1980 and again in 1985. All that was needed was a genuinely convincing issue which would galvanise the entire Opposition as a united entity. Events following the emergence of V. P. Singh as a rallying point for the opposition in 1987 provided such a scenario. How the Janata current that had continued to flow between 1980-87 mingled with this scenario to culminate in the second Janata Experiment, and how close was it to the First Janata Experiment shall be analysed in the next chapter.

## NOTES

1. See Appendices, George Fernandes' Interview, (exclusive for this dissertation). He recounts how certain sections among the non-Congress political forces, including himself, were optimistic about putting their house back in order, almost immediately after the results for the December 1979 - January 1980 parliamentary elections, spelling electoral disaster for them, started pouring in.
2. See, Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susane H. Rudolph, In pursuit of Lakshmi : The Political Economy of the Indian State, Chicago - London, The University of Chicago Press, 1987. p.459.
3. India: A Reference Annual 1984, Delhi; Research and Reference Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1984. See, 'Major Events of 1983'.
4. L.I. Rudolph and S.H. Rudolph, Ibid.
5. India Today, October 1977.
6. India Today, September, 1977.
7. Ibid.
8. See Appendices, Madhu Laimaya's exclusive interview. Charan Singh and Raj Narain were dropped from the Janata Cabinet in June 1978.

9. Jay Dubashi, 'Another Jolt for Janata Ignoring Mrs. Gandhi at their Peril', India Today, November 1978.
10. Lloyd I Rudolph and Susane H. Rudolph, 'Transformation of Congress Party: Why 1980 was not a restoration', Economic and Political Weekly, 2nd May 1981.
11. Richard Sisson and William Vanderbok, 'Mapping the Indian Electorate II', Asian Survey, October 1984.
12. Lloyd I Rudolph and Susane H. Rudolph, In Pursuit of Lakshmi ..., Ibid. Chap. 9.
13. Ibid. Chap 6. The authors note that 1962, 1967 and 1977 parliamentary elections marked deterioration of Congress support in Hindi Heartland which 1971 and 1980 parliamentary elections only partially reversed.
14. Harold Gould, 'Second Coming : The 1980 Elections in the Hindi Belt', Asian Survey, June 1980. The role of Hindi Belt in determining the return of the Congress is deliberated
15. Writing in 1992 it may be noted that again, it was the electoral reverse faced by the Congress in 1989 parliamentary elections in the North which was a prime factor for its loss of majority. Conditions for Congress did not improve much in the North even in 1991 parliamentary elections.

16. L.K. Advani, The People Betrayed, Delhi, Viswion Books, 1979. Clarifying the stand of the Jan Sangh constituents of Janata Party, Mr Advani presents the 'duel membership' question involving Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (R.S.S.) as a non-issue. See Chap. VIII, 'A Scarcecrow comes Alive'.
17. India: A Reference Annual 1981, Delhi, Research and Reference Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1981.  
See, 'Major Events of 1980'.
18. Romesh Thaper, 'Capital-View', Economic and Political Weekly, 29th March 1980.
19. Sunil Sethi, 'Flight of Destiny: Saying dies and creates a political vacuum', India Today, July 1980.
20. Economic and Political Weekly, 22nd February, 1980.
21. Economic and Political Weekly, 8th March, 1980.
22. Economic and Political Weekly, 7th June, 1980.
23. Romesh Thapar, 'Political Alternative', Economic and Political Weekly, 20th September, 1980.
24. See George Fernandes' Interview, Appendices, Ibid.
25. Economic and Political Weekly, 20.th.September, 1980,  
Ibid.

26. Economic and Political Weekly, 3-10 January, 1981.
27. India : A Reference Annual 1982, Delhi, Research and Reference Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1982. See, 'Major Events of 1981'.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. India: A Reference Annual 1983, Delhi, Research and Reference Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983. See, 'Major Events of 1982'.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid. Lok Dal President Charan Singh announced his retirement from politics on 6th April. On 8th April Biju Patnaik, Devi Lal, and Kumbhan Ram Arya were suspended from the primary membership of Lok Dal. The Charan Singh decided to return to active politics on 15 th April and the suspension orders against the three Lok Dal leaders were revoked three days later.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.

37. India: A Reference Annual 1984,... Ibid.  
See, 'Major Events of 1983'.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. India: A Reference Annual 1985, Delhi, Research and Reference Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1985. See, 'Major Events of 1984'
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. T.N. Niwan, 'A Historic Mandate: Vote for both continuity and change', India Today, January 1985.
45. David Butler, Ashok Lahiri, Pranoy Roy, India Decided : Elections 1952 - 1991, Delhi, L M Books, 1991.
46. Ibid.
47. India: A Reference Annual 1986, Delhi, Ministry of I & B, Government of India, 1986. India: A Reference Annual 1987, Delhi; Ministry of I & B, Government of India 1987.
48. Ibid.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SECOND JANATA EXPERIMENT : 1987-90

V.P. Singh, the Finance Minister in Rajiv Gandhi's cabinet was made the Defence Minister in January 1987.<sup>1</sup> Having ordered an enquiry in the Fairfax-Affair involving the HDW Submarine-Deal, he quit the Cabinet on 12th April amidst the ensuing controversy.<sup>2</sup> Finally, he resigned from the Congress in mid-July (Arun Nehru, V.C. Shujka, and Arif Mohammad Khan were expelled from Congress, the day before while the Tourism Minister Mufti Md. Saed had already resigned).<sup>3</sup> On one hand, while V.P. Singh represented the simmering discontent in the Congress rank and file, and the crises which rocked the Party and the government in 1987, on the other hand he was also to be the rallying point around which the entire opposition - this time even the communists (under the banner of the Left-Front), and including the various constituents of the first Janata-Experiment - launched a broadly united political offensive against the Congress, culminating in the second non-congress government at the Centre since independence.

While not denying the specificities of time to the various events in Indian Polity of 1987, it needs to be noted that they also reflected the continuity of those new trends in Indian Polity, and more specifically the Indian Party System, apparent since late 1960s and early 1970s,

that had already contributed significantly to the rise of the Janata Party government at the centre in 1977.<sup>4</sup> The 'de-institutionalisation' of congress had aided to the rise of plebiscitary politics and elections.<sup>5</sup> Beginning with 'Garibi-Hatao' in 1971, 'Emergency-Hatao' in 1977; Janata-Hatao' in 1980; 'Desh-Bachao' in 1984; it went on to become Rajiv-Hatao in 1989.<sup>6</sup> Individual leadership appeal became far more important the party structure for obtaining votes. The legitimacy of a party and its structures was replaced by an altogether more unstable and inherently ephemeral legitimacy of individuals. As such, and rather ironically, the clear majority that the congress got in 1971 and 1980, and the Janata Party in 1977, and the huge majority that Rajiv Gandhi lapped up in 1984 December, could not secure a stable and effective government in the case of the Congress, and a full-term, in the case of the Janata Party. Achin Vanaik has attempted a lucid analysis of this situation within his marxist parameters. He writes, "India faces a basic paradox. On one hand there is endemic political instability. A crisis of bourgeois leadership has persisted since the mid-1970s. On the other hand, the larger bourgeois democratic framework has shown remarkable durability since 1947".<sup>7</sup> More relevant in relation to the two Janata experiments is the factor of continuing 'crisis of bourgeois leadership .... since mid-1970s'. As noted in the first chapter, related to this instability was the increasing political assertion of the middle and rich peasantry, repre-



sented by Charan Singh.<sup>8</sup> The torch was carried on by Devi Lal after his death. Devi Lal had missed the Chief-Ministership of Haryana by a whisker in May 1982<sup>9</sup>, and emerged victorious in June, 1987 Assembly election in Haryana, giving another jolt to Rajiv Gandhi's government, which was already in turmoil. Hence, it was true to the plebiscitary nature of politics and de-institutionalised state of Congress that Rajiv Gandhi was fast losing his ground barely half way to his five year term, in 1987. V.P. Singh was seen as symbolising the prevailing conditions.

This chapter tries to analyse the flow of the Janata-Current between 1987-90. 1987 onwards the current was given a new orientation amidst the fast changing turn of events both in the Congress and in the Opposition, as V.P. Singh emerged as the focal point of the opposition unity. Ultimately the potential for a Congress alternative that had emerged in mid 1970s<sup>10</sup> was realised once again in form of the second non-congress government at the centre in December 1989. That its performance at the centre proved to be worse than the first Janata Experiment, is touched upon in the last section of this chapter.

#### **RISE OF THE SECOND NON-CONGRESS CENTRAL GOVERNMENT**

The Janata-spirit that had managed to survive in the land-scape of Indian Polity between 1980-87, mingled with the events that were fast unfolding between 1987-89, crys-

tallised into a broadly united opposition, and paved the path for the second non-Congress government at the Centre in the ninth Lok Sabha. This section of the chapter, first looks into the disillusionment of the people with the Rajiv Gandhi's Congress government. Next, it analyses how the various unity efforts in the opposition veered around V.P. Singh, to take on the Congress more or less jointly, in the November 1989 parliamentary elections.

Large sections of Indian society vested great hopes in the rise of Rajiv Gandhi. He was perceived as the outstanding representative of the new India, of the rising middle class and of the modernizing and aggressively ambitious private sector fettered by the chains of state controls. He was seen as a leader who would modernize the entire set-up including the political arena by attacking corruption and patronage, re-institutionalising the Congress, halting the erosion of other institutions, and prompting a more stable and norm-guided competition between the congress and opposition forces both at the centre and state levels.

Had he succeeded, he would not only have vindicated his credibility, but would have also placed the Congress back on the commanding position it enjoyed during first one and a half decades of independent India.<sup>11</sup> But, given the changes in Indian society and polity that had set in since 1970s for good (and which have been briefly hinted at earlier), it was simply not possible for Rajiv Gandhi to have lived up to the

sky-high expectations. It was not possible for him because "since 1970s Indian Political system is in irreversible transition to a new order whose topography has still to be properly surveyed."<sup>12</sup>

During the initial days the way Rajiv Gandhi went about the Punjab and Assam accords (without going into their merits) and brought about settlement of insurgency problem in Mizoram, and virtually gifted away the governments in these states to their respective regional parties in the process, was a break from his mother's days when she forcibly tried to impose congress hegemony over the states - the sordid drama of removing the N.T.R. government in Andhra Pradesh and Farooq Abdullah's government in Jammu and Kashmir in mid-1984 standing as testimonies. May be, that is why the Rudolphs believed "collegiality, institutional autonomy and decentralisation seemed to have a better chance than they had in a decade."<sup>13</sup> Yet, very soon, all efforts of Rajiv Gandhi at re-institutionalising the congress came to a naught -- his famous speech at Congress Centenary Celebrations in 1985 declaring to rid the congress of power-brokers not withstanding.

"As stunningly rapid as his rise, has been his downslide, now increasingly reflected in the growing rumblings within the party and in the sullen public mood."<sup>14</sup> A series of acute crises rocked Rajiv's government in 1987. The year began with shoddy mishandling of border-exercises with Pakistan which nearly escalated into a war, removal of the

foreign secretary, A.P. Venkateshwaran, in a rather dubious manner, and the transfer of V.P. Singh from Finance to Defence Ministry.<sup>15</sup> A constitutional crisis broke out between the President and the Prime Minister peaking to its climax in mid-July 1987. It was alleged that former was conspiring to dismiss the latter in the context of the corruption scandals surrounding defence deals, and the possibility of those close to or within the Gandhi family being involved in them.<sup>16</sup> Serious inter-corporate rivalries were also surfacing in which the administration was alleged to have played favourites.<sup>17</sup> Along with these, were the failure of the Congress in West Bengal, Kerala and Haryana state Assembly, elections,<sup>18</sup> the inability of the Congress regime to deal adequately with persisting domestic and external problems (specially, Punjab and Sri Lanka), the growth of inner-party discontent as the old guard fought Rajiv's new men, the rise of V.P. Singh as a national figure and a possible alternative to Rajiv Gandhi, and, above all, the problem of corruption in the government, which became the focal point of the crisis. Early 1987 the National Swedish Radio announced that in Bofors Gun-Deal 33 million Swedish Kroner (Rs. 6.6 crore) had been paid to an Indian source through four Swiss Bank Accounts codenamed 'Lotus' (Lotus, in Hindi, is one of the synonyms for the Hindi word 'Rajiv').<sup>19</sup>

The accelerated economic turn to the market during Rajiv era was accompanied by a new rhetoric of cleaning up

government, business, and the interference between the two. The achievement fell short of the target. The cleaning up operations were pursued over-zealously by Rajiv Gandhi's finance minister, V.P. Singh (personal political ambitions not ruled out). When his enthusiasm went beyond the comfort of the big business, he was shifted to the Defence Ministry, which snowballed into his expulsion from Congress.

Buoyant at their successes in the various state-assembly elections held since December 1984 sweeping mandate (Congress conceding over half a dozen states to the opposition), wresting more and more seats from Congress in the by-elections for both state assemblies and Lok Sabha, and given the sad state of the Rajiv Gandhi's government and the Congress party, once again there existed a distinct possibility for the opposition to emerge as the congress-alternative at the centre in the coming parliamentary elections, if only could they join their hands. It was not merely a hypothetical conjecture like that of Lohia in 1960s, (howso-ever thoughtful, logical, and prophetic), but just a matter of re-activating the potential for a Congress alternative at the centre which had already been realised once, just over a decade back. This can be substantiated by the poll, commissioned by India Today, and conducted by Marketing and Research Group (MARG) covering 13, 166 registered voters across the country between July 27 and August 2, 1988. The results had suggested that if the opposition parties were to put up a common electoral front -- as they

did in 1977 -- the Congress (I) would have lost, getting only 223 seats (majority in Lok Sabha implied a minimum of 272 seats - out of a total of 542 seats). A V.P. Singh led front would win over 300 Lok Sabha Seats.<sup>20</sup> Two points need to be added here : first, unlike 1977 when CPI had openly supported the Emergency and sided with the congress (R) of Mrs. Gandhi, in 1988-89 both CPI and CPI (M) were with the opposition most unambiguously; and secondly, regarding the authenticity of the India Today - MARG poll, it would be suffice to add that they, later, predicted 195 seats for Congress in November 1989 parliamentary elections, and the number of seats which Congress (I) actually got was 193. <sup>21</sup> If held under same conditions, similar polls in February and August, 1989 had predicted 203, and 244 seats for Congress (I) - well short of majority in both the cases.

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While the press was predicting a possible electoral defeat of Rajiv Gandhi, he landed himself in yet another embarrassing corner in September, 1988 regarding his proposed 'Defamation Bill' which created a sense of outrage all around, including in his own party. On 4th September he declared, "we are totally convinced that the (Defamation) bill is needed. I am myself convinced that we are on the right line". Within less than twenty days he had to eat back his own words when he said, "Without a free press, there can be no democracy. We have therefore decided not to make Defamation Bill into law."<sup>23</sup>

As such, the stage was set for the opposition to make a concerted bid for unity. It may be noted that the conditions in 1987 were different from those on the eve of the first Janata Experiment in mid-1970s. The changes that were taking place since early 1970s --- the increasing political assertion of the middle and rich peasantry, the de-institutionalisation of the Congress, and the plebiscitary nature of politics and elections etc .... --- were relatively new in the Indian polity and party system in the mid-1970s, while by 1987 the same had had comparatively longer innings and had more or less settled down in our polity. Hence, while there was the prolonged and sustained J.P. Movement in 1973-75, followed by the infamous Emergency for about two years, and the sudden announcement of Parliamentary elections after that - and only then did the unified opposition actually emerge ; the path for the realisation of the united electoral front against Congress was not that eventful, challenging, and stupendous between 1987-89.

'Jan Morcha', primarily consisting of the Congress dissidents expelled from the party, was launched under the leadership of V.P. Singh on 2nd October 1987 (a purposive choice of date). While it hailed itself as a historic-movement, <sup>24</sup> it was apparently a platform for its constituents to play a wait-and-watch game, and for keeping the euphoric popular response, that they were getting, alive. Being the President of Janata Party since May 1977, and having kept it alive during 1980-87 through the various

splits and mergers <sup>25</sup>, by 1987-88 Chandra Shekhar had become hardened, matured, and shrewd enough a politician, to realise instinctively that his chances of claiming the Prime Ministership was in jeopardy with the emergence of V.P. Singh as a possible pivot of opposition unity, and resultantly, he started working for an alternative unity-effort. Among the key-actors of the first Janata-Experiment, while Morarji Desai had retired from active-politics, Jagjivan Ram, Raj Narain, and Charan Singh had passed away between 1986-87. Following Charan Singh death, Lok Dal had split on the eve of Haryana-assembly election in mid-1987. The faction under Ajit Singh's leadership was called Lok Dal (A), and the one led by Bahuguna-Devi Lal combine, the Lok Dal (B). This was the backdrop in which definite moves for opposition unity began in 1988.

Three events of significance for Opposition occurred in the first half of 1988 which can be seen as co-related --- Mr. Ram Krishan Hegde's initiative to unite all the centrist parties into one, 'People's National Party' under the leadership of V.P. Singh, merger of Lok Dal (A) and Sanjay Manch with the Janata Party and Ajit Singh's nomination as its working president, and the revolt in Karnataka Janata legislative party against the Chief Minister, R.K. Hegde.<sup>26</sup> Chandra Shekhar calculated that his alliance with Ajit Singh and absorption of Sanjay-Manch would, on one hand, counter the move for the proposed Jan Morcha-Lok Dal (B)-Congress (S) joint-platform under V.P. Singh, and on the other hand,



by symbolising the unity between Jats and Thakurs (Rajputs), two of the most powerful castes in all important U.P., would also greatly enhance his bargaining power there. The revolt in Karnataka was meant to keep Hegde pinned down to the South and thus hamper the unity-efforts under V.P. Singh initiated by him. So, at that point Janata Party stood divided (though formally united) with Chandra Shekhar and Ajit Singh on one side, and Hegde, George Fernandes, Biju Patnaik, Madhu Dandvate etc . . . ., on the other.<sup>27</sup>

Since 1980 relevance of the Janata Party, mostly depended on its ability to form and sustain a government in Karnataka for five years and build up a powerful opposition in Orissa. The sustaining force of Janata was, thus, largely provided by R.K. Hegde and Biju Patnaik. Similarly the Lok Dal had maintained a strong to reasonable opposition in Bihar, U.P., and Haryana (formed its government in Haryana in mid-1987), and the B.J.P. in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. While the CPI (M) led left-Front remained a significant force in West Bengal and Kerala; Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Punjab remained dominated by the regional parties. It was in this light that V.P. Singh made his proposed for a three-tier arrangement among opposition parties -- merger of centrist parties, alliance with regional parties, and seat adjustments with both the Left and the B.J.P.

Then came the Allahabad by-election for the Lok Sabha, vacated by the resignation of Amitabh Bachchan in May-June 1988. V.P. Singh was projected as the joint candidate of the entire opposition and the various opposition leaders vied with each other to campaign for him. Chandra Shekhar was almost the sole exception who refused to accept V.P. Singh's leadership. V.P. Singh won hands down, and the move for opposition-unity got a further fillip. Chandra Shekhar is reported to have remarked "we wanted an alternative to Rajiv Gandhi not a substitute". To this Biju Patnaik had shot back "No opposition leader worth the name would join Mr. Chandra Shekhar in this calumny against the magnificent victory of the opposition at Allahabad with Mr. V.P. Singh as the symbol."<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile in May, Janata Party had tentatively worked out its interim organization structure. Ajit Singh, though named the president remained more of a figurehead as all organizational and policy-decisions were to be taken by the parliamentary board of the party with Madhu Dandavate as its chairman.<sup>29</sup> So, in July, Madhu Dandavate joined the five member committee of opposition parties to work for the unity among the centrist opposition forces (Devi Lal and R.K. Hegde being its other prominent members) without caring to inform the party-president about it.<sup>30</sup>

As the unity efforts of centrist opposition parties really got underway in July 1988, the other parties clari-

fied their stands. Just short of merger, B.J.P. favoured all political adjustments towards opposition-unity. Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), Telgu Desam Party (TDP), and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) also declared the same.<sup>31</sup> Finally, the Janata Party's Central Parliamentary Board unanimously welcomed the 26th July proposed for a unified centrist party with V.P. Singh as its President in September.<sup>32</sup> V.P. Singh was authorised to nominate a steering committee (proportionately representing the merging constituents) to advise and help him in working out the modalities of merger.<sup>33</sup> (Meanwhile S.R. Bommai had already taken over as the Chief Minister of Karnataka from R.K. Hegde). On 29th September a 17 member steering committee (6 from Janata Party, 4 each from Lok Dal and Jan Morcha, and 3 from Congress-S) was announced by V.P. Singh to meet at his residence on 3rd October (even as Indubhai Patel quit Janata post). Before the Foundation Conference of the proposed new opposition party in Bangalore, the nominated panel adopted the Janata Party constitution as its basis. Ultimately on 11th October 1988, birth anniversary of late Mr. Jayprakash Narayan, a new centrist party, the Janata Dal (the appellation 'Samajwadi' or socialist, proposed earlier, being dropped) became a reality as the Janata Party, Lok Dal, and the Jan Morcha merged into one.<sup>34</sup> Congress-S decided to retain its identity, may be, keeping in mind its regional interests in Kerala. A few microscopic fractions of the parties which merged, stubbornly clinged to their previous identities, only to be politically wiped out in the November

1989 parliamentary elections. Like Mrs. Gandhi's Congress the Janata Dal appeared to represent the entire spectrum of caste, class, community, and regional interests,<sup>35</sup> but the fact remained that its core comprised of a conglomerate of north India's relatively affluent backward groups.

'Once bitten twice shy' was the BJP's approach towards the emerging centrist alliance, when it deliberated at its three days National Executive meeting at Ahmedabad. It was not prepared to trade its identity for the sake of opposition-unity. Regarding B.J.P.'s approach towards the new Janata Dal, L.K. Advani said that opposition credibility was more important than opposition unity, and that, yet, B.J.P.'s attitude towards the Janata Dal would be one of "responsive and reciprocal co-operation."<sup>36</sup>

In December 1988, V.P. Singh announced a 138 member national executive, a 22 member steering committee and a four-posts-new-leadership set-up for the Janata Dal. Along with V.P. Singh, as its President, R.K. Hegde, Ajit Singh, and Devi Lal were to be the Vice-President, Secretary General, and Chairman of the Parliamentary Board, respectively. Discontent had started brewing up almost immediately after the declaration of the national-executive and steering-committee among those who were left out.<sup>37</sup>

As the election year 1989 began, a new all-India alliance, called National-Front emerged. It comprised of Janata Dal, Congress (S), Asom Gana Parishad, Telgu Desam

Party, and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, with the Janata Dal as its major force. The big convention of National Front was organized in Madras, where each of the parties aligned declared to contest the coming parliamentary elections unitedly. N.T. Ramarao was elected its convenor and V.P. Singh the chairman.

As late as in September-October 1989 (election scheduled for November) a new front, 'Parivartansheel-Morcha' -- comprising of Bahujan Samaj Party (B.S.P.), Janata Party (a tiny left-over fraction), and possibly Pattali Makkal Katchi, political arm of Vanniyars in Tamil Nadu, was also formed. It decided to keep away from both National Front and B.J.P.

Thus on the eve of November 1989 parliamentary elections the opposition had been lined-up in three main alliances - the National Front, the Left-Front, and the B.J.P. Though the seat - adjustments among the three did give some anxious moments, finally the entire opposition stood more or less united to face the Congress (I). The extent of opposition unity attained was next only to that of 1977.

Finally, when V.P. Singh, as the new Prime Minister formed the National-Front government with the support of both the Left-Front and the B.J.P. from outside, the non-congress government at the centre had become a reality yet again. (See, Appendix I, for the election results)

Thus, the process for getting together of the opposition towards the second Janata Experiment did not witness as great a political upheaval as the J.P. Movement or the Emergency. It was mainly because, true to the de-institutionalised and personalised party system in India, that had taken roots in India by late 1980s, the Indian electorates were swayed by the new 'Mr. Clean', the V.P. Singh who, while acting as a catalyst for galvanising the opposition into one, also translated his popularity into votes decisively for the opposition.

#### SECOND NON-CONGRESS GOVERNMENT AT THE CENTRE

While path towards realising the second Janata-Experiment was less thorny than the first one, the process of disintegration of its government at the centre was much faster. On governance front, too, it compared rather unfavourably (to say the least) with the first experiment. In this section, both the political and governance aspects of the Janata Dal-led government at the centre between December 1989 to October 1990 will be dealt with one by one.

Electoral performance of the opposition (and, hence, also the Congress) depend on a few factors -- the extent of opposition unity (in 1989 there were one-to-one contest in around 300 constituencies, while in 1977 it was in about 400 constituencies), <sup>38</sup> and the shift in popular support (called 'swing' by psephologists <sup>39</sup>) or in more socio-

politically concrete terms, the relative social bases of the various contending political parties. As in 1977, the opposition-front was able to make deep incursions into the traditional congress base amongst the minorities, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and the upper castes (specially Brahmins). The Janata Dal accounted for the minorities (disillusioned by the Congress mishandling of the 'Ayodhya-issue'), the well-off sections of the significant rich and middle peasantry of the north-India (thanks to its Lok Dal constituent), as also the consequential and vociferous urban middle class. The BJP, while retaining its traditional hold over the influential trading community, also cut into the congress votes among the upper castes (specially Brahmins). Devi Lal declared to have mobilised the formidable AJGAR combination [A-Ahirs (Yadavs), J-Jats, G-Gujjars, A-Adivasis, seat-adjustments with J.M.M., the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, and R-Rajputs, personified by V.P. Singh himself] for the Janata Dal. The internal conflicts that raged in the Janata Dal - led government during its less-than-a-year tenure, also need to be viewed in the background of the tussle between these different social interests, various leaders symbolising the different factions. Devi Lal stood for the all important rich and middle peasantry, and the middle castes. At the same time the clash of social interests should not be taken as being deterministic, because the personal political ambitions, selfish manoeuvres, and the resultant conspiracies and intrigues also had their due

share in bringing down the second Janata Experiment at the centre.

As close to the parliamentary elections (November 1989) as 29th May 1989, when full-fledged campaigning of the broadly united opposition was already underway, Chandra Shekhar was reiterating in Jaunpur, "V.P. Singh is not my leader." <sup>40</sup> His bid to outsmart V.P. Singh throughout the unity-process has already been dealt with, in the earlier section of this chapter. But V.P. Singh was riding the wave of popularity, then. Unlike Charan Singh who had never accepted Morarji Desai's leadership till the very last when he wilted in the latter's favour in his bid to stop Jagjivan Ram from becoming the P.M. ; Devi Lal, inspite of his latent ambition, had been consistently declaring V.P. Singh to be the leader of the opposition. As such when the hour of reckoning came on December 1, 1989 for the victorious Janata Dal Parliamentary Party to elect its leader, and thus the Prime Minister designate, Chandra Shekhar found himself almost isolated. Yet, as it was later to be proved, he was down but not out, and his non-acceptance of V.P. Singh's leadership continued blatantly.

At the same time the manoeuvres and intrigue that V.P. Singh permitted, and which climaxed in the suspense-packed final few moments --- when first Devi Lal was declared elected as the Prime Minister (designate) by the Janata Dal Parliamentary Party on December 1, 1989, who, then, magnanimously withdrew in favour of V.P. Singh to the thunderous



applause of the entire gathering --- did not speak very highly of V.P. Singh's statesmanship.<sup>41</sup> Infact had V.P. Singh gone in for the election by voting (in which he would have won, any way) he would not only have made a courageous start (threat to party-unity was a planted fogery) but would have definitely emerged a few inches taller, too. The manner of election of its leader, appeared to be ominous for the future in-fighting in the Janata Dal government, which finally led to its undoing in less than a year.

Key to the internal clashes in the Janata-Dal led government can be provided by the replacement of Devi Lal from the Chief Ministership at Haryana by his eldest son Om Prakash Chautala, who was already the Haryana Janata Dal President. The by-election from the Meham constituency, from where Chautala sought to be returned to the Legislative Assembly, witnessed unprecedented violence and booth-capturing, transmitting waves of outrage all over the country. It came to be known as the 'Meham-Mayhem'. Protests erupted even from within the central government and ultimately Chautala was forced to step-down. Though putting up a brave face, he felt humiliated, and, more importantly, so did Devi Lal, the Deputy Prime Minister. Soon, Devi Lal actually resigned, but was persuaded to be back in the government.

From here on the battle-lines were drawn, as both camps kept sniping at each other at the slightest available oppor-

tunity. Bofors - investigations remained unfinished, and so did the exposure of those involved in the various multi-crore corruption scandals in quite a few defence-deals. One of these was the import of German-pistols when Arun Nehru was the Minister for Internal Security in Rajiv Gandhi's government. Lapping up the issue Devi Lal kept casting aspersions at Arun Nehru, and not caring to be subtle (may be deliberately) at times. As the internal clashes raged during the first half of 1990 in the V.P. Singh's government, it is needless to add that one man relishing it the most was Chandra Shekhar.<sup>42</sup>

The slide towards disintegration was rapid in the case of Janata Dal. While it had taken nearly two years for the Janata Party government to take the final leap towards fall (when Raj Narain was kept out of the Cabinet and humiliated, while Charan Singh was welcomed back in January 1979),<sup>43</sup> the V.P. Singh's government did the same in merely six months. In July 1990, V.P. Singh met Devi Lal over dinner in his bid to patch-up. What exactly, were the terms and conditions on which the deal was struck is not known, but within a couple of days Om Prakash Chautala was back in the saddle as the Chief Minister of Haryana. Almost every one was taken in by surprise. A series of resignations by the central ministers started, with Arun Nehru and his friends in the lead. Finally Devi Lal was dropped from the government on 2nd August 1990.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, Devi Lal reportedly called V.P. Singh 'spineless', and used similar unkind words for

those who were against him in the government.<sup>44</sup> This had further isolated him in the government.

Most decisive and suicidal blow to the government was yet to be struck, and ironically it was meant to be its 'Sanjeevani Buti' (a mythological herb giving immortality). An ingenuous idea dawned upon V.P. Singh to pre-empt any move by Devi Lal to run away which one of the major social bases of the Janata Dal -- the middle and rich peasantry, the 'middle class' or the middle castes -- which Devi Lal had been symbolising, any way, since the death of Charan Singh (most immediate threat to it was the call for a 'Kisan Rally' at the Boat Club, Delhi on 9th August 1990 given by Devi Lal). The panacea, decided upon for the government, was the implementation of the Mandal Commission's Recommendations suggesting an additional 27% reservation for "socially and educationally backward classes" in recruitment into government jobs signed by V.P. Singh on 7th August 1990.<sup>46</sup> It was pure and hard political one-upmanship, and philanthropic or benevolent angle, if any, was definitely not the primary aspect of the decision.

Without going into the merits (or demerits) of the 'Mandal Commission', what is relevant at this point, is how it contributed to the downfall of the Janata Dal-led government. Being very sure of the 'means' of taking away the constituency of the all important middle castes from Devi Lal and in the process also those of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/STs), V.P. Singh planned to go about

all alone (with Ram Vilas Paswan as his sole adviser) with an aim of taking the entire credit single-handedly. It was an attempted emulation of Mrs. Gandhi, who had single-handedly created solid block of minorities and SC/STs for herself and had swept the 1971 parliamentary polls on the slogan of 'garibi-hatao'. Like V.P. Singh, Mrs. Gandhi was also heading a minority government (since the 1969 split) supported from outside by CPI. Comparisons end here, as in addition to the Left-Front (over 50 members) V.P. Singh's government was also supported by the B.J.P. (85 members)<sup>47</sup>. Both B.J.P. and Left Front felt threatened electorally, so formidable was the constituency which, they thought, V.P. Singh was aiming to usurp. There on, B.J.P. lost all interest in the survival of the V.P. Singh's government, and started working single-mindedly and feverishly for ensuring its own political survival in the event of a mid-term, which was staring at their face now. Even those within the central government -- like Arun Nehru and friends, who thought it was their prerogative to draw strategies for the 'Raja', and most of the other Cabinet-colleagues who thought that it was truly a collective - leadership in Janata Dal government suddenly felt cheated.

What V.P. Singh was least prepared for, was almost spontaneous and incredible outrage that erupted throughout the north India, and in certain cases even spilling over the Vindhyas to Andhra Pradesh in protest against the Mandal Commission's implementation.<sup>48</sup> Suddenly the urban middle

class, whose influence in determining the electoral outcome have been disproportionately great had got totally disenchanted with V.P. Singh. The press was near unanimous in castigating him for, what it saw as, a retrograde step. So the disillusionment with V.P. Singh was complete.

As most of the August and September was occupied by the anti-Mandal-agitations (later even pro-mandal-demonstrations were held), it provided time and space to the B.J.P. to make a determined bid to wrest the initiative from V.P. Singh, otherwise perish politically. Means employed for it was the 'Somnath to Ayodhya Rathyatra'. Though its plans were pre-Mandal, it was embarked upon with a purposive vigour in the changed scenario. It was thought that the resultant euphoric Hindu-revivalism would cut-across the caste-divisions flared up by the Mandal and ensure the Hindu-votes in bulk for the B.J.P.<sup>49</sup> As the Bihar Chief Minister, Lalu Prasad Yadav dared to arrest L.K. Advani and stop the 'Rath' before it entered U.P., B.J.P. withdrew its support to the V.P. Singh's government saying that it was coming in the way of the construction of 'Ram-Temple' in Ayodhya. V.P. Singh still refused to resign, hoping for the support of backward and SC/ST M.P.s of all parties. This was not to be, as on 7th November 1990, after being defeated on the floor of the House of the parliament, V.P. Singh resigned alongwith his government, claiming to have sacrificed his chair not only for the socially-downtrodden ('Mandal') but also for the secularism.<sup>50</sup>

Thus for all practical purposes the second Janata Experiment also met the same fate as the first, though much sooner. The spasmodic political upheavals since August 1990 had left the Congress (I) apparently without any social base and hence it badly needed to buy time. On the other hand was Chandra Shekhar, who badly wanted to be the Prime Minister of India. The two joined hands and delayed the elections till June 1991. This way any immediate electoral gain that the Janta Dal or BJP would have reaped in the wake of euphoria that they had created was also denied to them.

Coming to the performance aspect of the National Front Government, just about twelve months is quite short span of time to judge a government's performance. Yet, an attempt to have a rough idea of the same, can be made by reviewing the important policy measures announced, and the decisions taken by the government. This task is undertaken in this last sub-section of the final chapter. First the political and institutional issues will be touched upon and then the economic and social ones.

One of the first acts of the new government was regarding the institution of Lok Pal, and the Prasar Bharti issue about the media autonomy. This can be understood as the responses to the two glaring issues on which the elections were contested by the joint opposition - one was the corruption at high places and the other being the conversion of 'Doordarshan' into 'Rajiv-Darshan'. Dinesh Goswami, Minis-

ter of Law and Justice, presented both the Lok Pal Bill, and the Prasar Bharti (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Bill, 1989 in the Lok Sabha on 29th December 1987.<sup>51</sup> Improving upon the earlier recommendations, the new Lok Pal Bill sought to establish a Lok Pal, with a chairman and two members who would either be serving or retired judges of the Supreme Court. Significantly, even the Prime Minister was included in its purview. Prasar Bharti Bill sought to grant autonomy to the government controlled media -- Doordarshan and Akashvani. By the time it was passed 'unanimously' on 30th August 1990, it was so watered down that someone rightly commented, 'Not quite so free, after all'.<sup>52</sup>

**ACTION PLAN:** On January 1, 1990, the National Front Government put forward a time bound action plan covering right to work, land reforms, a long term fiscal policy, new support price for agricultural crops, judicial reforms, special programme for urban poor, a commission on women, a new three year import export policy, amendment of the 'Official Secrets Act', and promised an outlay of at least 50% investible resources on agricultural and rural sectors starting with the annual plan 1990-91<sup>53</sup> (it was just over 40% during the Janata Party government between 1977-80).<sup>54</sup> Though it sounded like merely reading out an election manifesto, the measures which the government initiated during the next six-seven months indicated that the government did act upon most of what it had assured.

Electoral and Judicial Reforms were among the important issues undertaken. The Law and Justice Minister introduced two Bills titled the Constitution (70th Amendment) Bill 1990 and the constitution (71st Amendment) Bill 1990, besides the eagerly awaited legislation 'The Representation of the Peoples (Amendment) Bill 1990' in May 1990. While the 70th Amendment Bill proposed changes in the manner of appointment of the chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners, and sought to provide for an Independent Secretariat to the Election Commission, the 71st Amendment sought to pave the path for the delimitation of constituencies, among other things. The 67th Amendment that was introduced proposed to set up a National Judicial Commission to help in making judicial appointments.

On 3rd February 1990 the government reconstituted the National Integration Council (NIC) under the Chairmanship of the Prime Ministers. Besides six Union Ministers and all Chief Ministers, it included leaders of various national and regional parties recognised by the Election Commission. It was to have 100 members in all.<sup>55</sup> It met after three and a half years in April 1990 and reviewed the challenges facing the country. Its effectiveness, however, has been rightly questioned. Same is, more or less true for the National Security Council (NSC). On 2nd August 1990, the Prime Minister announced NSC's formation in light of the "rapidly changing external environment and internal situation."



Headed by the Prime Minister it was to include Ministers of Defence, Finance, Home Affairs, and External Affairs.

True to its federal nature, the National Front Government utilised the provision under Art. 263 of the constitution to constitute an Inter-State Council. President issued the concerned notification on 24th June 1990. Headed by the Prime Minister and having six nominated Cabinet Ministers of State and Union Territories. It would be a forum for dialogue ensuring better co-ordination between Centre and State.<sup>56</sup> It may be noted that such a measure of the government did not appear very consistent with its decision to replace the Governors of 13 states and one Union Territory in late January 1990.<sup>57</sup>

Among the major policy decision of the new government was the announcement, declaring 1990-91 as a 'year of Social Justice'. as a tribute to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, whose birth century was being celebrated the same year. The Prime Minister announced this while conferring 'Bharat Ratna' on Dr Ambedkar posthumously. A related gesture was the 68th Constitutional Amendment Bill seeking to give statutory status to the Commission for Schedule Castes and Tribes.

The National Front Government's attitude towards the economic and social issues may be gauged by its Approach to the Eighth Five Year Plan (1990-95) approved by the National development Council in June 1990. It had made employment as the 'central thrust' of the plan. It also laid stress on

the decentralisation of the planning process, on the rural sector, on the development of human resources, and on the environmental protection. Striking change in the Eighth Plan was the reduced emphasis on growth rate of GDP, and stressing on the growth which provides "meaningful work, a reasonable minimum standard of living and essential social amenities to everyone as speedily as possible."

Regarding agricultural policies, the Bhanu Pratap Singh Committee, in its report submitted on 30th June 1990, emphasised that as long as agriculture is not given the same facilities and incentives being given to the industry, it is immaterial whether any formalised status is given to agriculture or not.<sup>58</sup> It suggested doubling of farm productions in next 15 years as the most effective remedy for rural poverty. Hanumantha Rao Committee went into the issue of farm pricing.<sup>59</sup>

The Industrial policy presented by Ajit Singh on 31st May 1990 showed no major deviations from original perspectives, except some priorities and strategies changes.<sup>60</sup> Worth noticing here are a series of measures announced on 20th June 1990 in the parliament introducing private sector in the power generation.<sup>61</sup>

The budget for 1990-91, first year of the Eight Plan, took care of the commitment of allot fifty percent of the investible resources for agriculture and rural development

and set apart one thousand crore rupees for the promised debt relief to small farmers, artisans and weavers.<sup>62</sup>

The N.F. government's performance, actually cannot be measured in terms of major economic indicators, because under V. P. Singh's Primeministership the government merely occupied the final four months of one financial year and barely first six months of the next. It may simply be noted that compared to 5.3% in the year 1988-89, the Inflation Rate went up to 9.1% in 1989-90, and climbed further upto 12.1% in 1989-90. (Figures from Economic Survey presented to the parliament on 16th March 1990 and pre budget Economic Survey presented to the parliament on 20th July 1991)<sup>63</sup>.

What was really tragic about the National Front Government is that it could never really take-off as a cohesive government. It remained so heavily enmeshed in internal clashes and one-upmanship that the various policy - measures initiated by it remained merely at the levels of gestures, tokens and noble intentions. Though the Janata Party government of 1977 had also disintegrated due to internal contradictions, its performance as a government between 1977-79 (including the economic indicators) could be compared favorably with any two years since independence.

Thus, in this chapter, it has been discussed how the potential for a Congress - alternative at the centre that had emerged in mid 1970s ( and which had been realised once in 1977) once again, made possible another non Congress.

government at the Centre in December 1989. It has also been reviewed how and why the National Front government that had come up, collapsed within less than a year. In spite of reflecting its intentions for bringing about some desirable changes in governmental policies and decisions, it failed to deliver anything concrete to the people. /RM60

## NOTES

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## CONCLUSION

A comparative study of the two Janata experiments, that has been undertaken in this dissertation, establishes that they have been the near inevitable products of the changes in Indian society and polity since late 1960s and early 1970s. As such, the two non-Congress governments at the centre (in 1977 and 1989) have been analysed as the political events in tune with ongoing transition, and not as the two aberrations of the Indian polity.

By the late 1960s power-equations among the elites of Indian society underwent a perceptible change. The middle and rich peasants were trying to assert their prominence in both society and polity by the virtue of having attained an upper hand in rural economy.<sup>1</sup> Almost simultaneously, the Congress dominance<sup>2</sup> in Indian party system had witnessed a distinct decline. The move for opposition unity initiated by Dr. Lohia was partially successful in 1967 parliamentary and state assembly elections. Congress just managed to retain a simple majority at the centre. At the state levels, where the Congress lost, the newly emerging intermediate class, and primarily the rich and middle peasantry, came into their own. They played the key roles in the first ever non-Congress governments that were formed in more than half a dozen states. In this context, Charan Singh's departure from the Congress, and his assuming the Chief Ministership of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) were significant. Given the

increasing clout of this section of society in the years which followed, they went on to make a determined bid for the power at the Centre. This process was being accompanied by progressive de-institutionalization of Congress, specially following its 1969 split. While the split forced Mrs. Indira Gandhi to launch an aggressively personalized party, it also provided an experienced and important political force (Congress-O) as a future ally to those sections which were going to lay their claims on the Central government. While the series of socio-economic and political crises in the country, followed by the momentous political upheavals (the J.P. movement and the Emergency) in the first half of 1970s can be related to the former, the rise of Janata Party as a Congress-alternative at the centre can be traced to the latter. The Jan Sangh, with its extensive organisational network, proved to be quite helpful in the rise of Janata Party. It was no mere co-incidence that the Jan Sangh President, Mr. L.K. Advani, acted as the General Secretary of the party on the eve of March 1977 parliamentary elections.

This way, a viable potential for a Congress-alternative at the Centre had emerged for the first time since independence. It may rightly be questioned that the Congress had all along been ruling on a minority vote (its percentage of votes polled had always remained less than 50%),<sup>3</sup> and in that sense the potential for a Congress alternative was also there all along; so what was new that emerged in mid-1970s ?

The fact which was new about the potential for Congress-alternative which emerged in the mid-1970s was that the Socialists and the Jan Sangh were no longer the mutually exclusive political entities, as they were in the 1950s and during most of the 1960s. This was the viable potential for a congress alternative at the centre which emerged in 1970s. It may be added that the analysis of the 'Janata-factor' between 1977-90 substantiates that this potential for a Congress-alternative at the Centre, had come in the Indian Polity to stay. In fact, it was strengthened further when in 1989 even the communists (led by CPM) shed their inhibition by joining hands with the BJP (earlier Jan Sangh).

In the second and third chapters it has been observed that the two Congress governments at the Centre in 1980s, continued the de-institutionalisation of the party further. Meanwhile the other centrist parties had also been de-institutionalised, and had become more and more personality based. The practice of appending the names of the leaders to the party's name gained currency, for exemple, Congress (I), Congress (S), Lok Dal (A) etc .... Beginning in 1971, the plebiscitary nature <sup>4</sup> of politics and elections had become in matter of fact by the second half of 1980s. In such conditions, a single glaring issue may be enough to make a party, or an alliance, win an election, but the same is not sufficient to guarantee a smooth full term ( of five years) to the government that is elected. As such inspite of an unprecedented majority of over 400 M.P.s behind him Rajiv

Gandhi found himself amidst a volley of crises merely half way through his tenure in 1987-88. Given this scenario, as the Janata-forces had managed to perpetuate their effective presence in Indian polity between 1980-87, it was relatively easier (compared to the political upheavals of mid 1970s) to realise the potential for a Congress alternative at the centre for the second time, in December 1989. It may be accepted that the November 1989 parliamentary elections also proved to be a plebiscitary election, being a referendum on the image of a new 'Mr. Clean' (V.P. Singh) as against the old 'Mr. Clean' (Rajiv Gandhi).

The actors may have changed, but the nature of socio-political forces behind the second non-Congress government at the centre remained, more or less, the same as the first. If anything, the rich and middle peasantry had become more assertive (Devi Lal's dominance), and the B.J.P. (earlier Jan Sangh) more determined and vociferous (The Ayodhya-issue). In the second Janata experiment, at the same time, certain new political forces had also pooled themselves in, apart from those which had joined hands during the first experiment. Among these new partners, were the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), the Dravida Munnetra Kazhamgam (DMK), and Telgu Desam Party (TDP), on one hand, and the Communists (Left Front - led by CPI-M) on the other, though the latter did not join the government. The Akali Dal, which was a coalition partner in 1977 Janata Party government at the Center, remained outside the pale of opposition unity in

1989. Another change was that, the BJP also supported the Janata Dal led government from outside in 1989, while the Jan Sangh had merged its entity in the Janata Party in 1977.

One of the aspects at issue in the two Janata Experiments is the reason for their failures. Too much has been said about their disintegration under the weight of their disparate elements. It would be interesting to observe that it was actually the incongruity between the leadership and the social bases which led to the demise of the two Janata experiments. The two most prominent factions of the Janata Party were the Jan Sangh and the Lok Dal, which was clearly reflected in the fact that out of the seven Chief Ministers of Janata Party three were from Jan Sangh and four from Lok Dal. Accordingly they also carried with them their social bases, to constitute the bulk of the support for the Janata Party. It was also proportionately reflected in the number of M.P.s. Yet the Prime Minister (Morarji Desai) was neither from Lok Dal nor from Jan Sangh, and hence the incongruity. Similarly, the rich and middle peasantry (the Lok Dal faction), and the urban middle class and upper castes (roughly the B.J.P.'s constituency) provided the back-bone of support for the National Front government, and yet again the Prime Minister (V.P. Singh) represented neither, and hence the incongruity once again. In a functioning democracy, the ruling coalition sustains itself by a mechanism for the smooth sharing of the spoils. In the lack of an adequate and proportionate leverage in the government

for the concerned social forces, this mechanism could not work properly, and hence the governments collapsed. In this light, the second Janata experiment was doomed from the beginning, because the B.J.P. had not even joined the government. At the same time, it may be accepted, that the reasons for the failures of the two experiments would remain debatable. What remains without doubt is the fact that after these two Janata experiments, Congress dominance of the Indian party system had diminished substantially.

**NOTES:**

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# APPENDIX I

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION RESULTS : 1952-89

	52	57	62	67	71	77	80	84	89
INC	364 (479) 45%	371 (490) 47.8%	361 (488) 44.7%	283 (516) 40.8%	342 (441) 43.7%	194 (492) 34.5%	353 (492) 42.7%	415 (517) 48.1%	197 (510) 39.5%
BJP/BJS	3 (94) 3.1%	4 (130) 5.9%	14 (196) 6.4%	35 (251) 9.4%	22 (160) 7.4%			2 (229) 7.4%	85 (85) 11.4%
JP/JD						295 (405) 41.3%	31 (432) 19%	10 (219) 6.7%	143 (244) 17.8%
CPI	16 (48) 3.1%	27 (110) 8.9%	29 (137) 9.9%	23 (106) 5%	23 (87) 4.7%	7 (91) 2.8%	11 (48) 2.6%	6 (66) 2.7%	12 (50) 2.6%
CPM				19 (62) 4.4%	25 (85) 5.1%	22 (53) 4.3%	36 (63) 6.1%	22 (64) 5.7%	33 (64) 6.5%
SP	12 (227) 10.6%		6 (107) 2.7%						
PSP		19 (189) 10.4%	12 (168) 6.8%	13 (109) 3.1%	2 (63) 1%				
KMPF	9 (145) 5.8%								
SWA			18 (173) 7.9%	44 (178) 8.7%	8 (56) 3.1%				
SSP				23 (122) 4.9%	3 (93) 2.4%				
TD								30 (34)	2 (33)
JPS/LKD							41 (294) 9.4%	3 (174) 5.6%	
INC (Q) <sup>(c)</sup>					16 (238) 10.4%	3 (19) 1.7%	13 (212) 5.3%	5 (39) 1.6%	1 (14) 0.3%
Others	47 (320) 16.3%	51 (119) 7.6%	34 (236) 10.5%	45 (161) 10%	53 (427) 13.8%	52 (155) 9.9%	35 (262) 8.5%	16 (225) 5.7%	22 (1016) 9.8%
Independents	38 (533) 13.9%	42 (481) 19.4%	20 (480) 11.1%	35 (864) 13.7%	14 (1134) 8.4%	9 (1224) 5.5%	9 (2826) 6.4%	5 (3878) 8.1%	12 (3703) 5.2%

Source: David Butler, Ashok Lahiri, and Pranoy Roy, *India Decides : Elections 1952-1991*, Lok Books, 1991.

Notes: (a) INC- Indian National Congress  
 BJP- Bharatiya Janata Party  
 BJS- Bharatiya Jan Sangh  
 JP- Janata Party  
 JD- Janata Dal  
 CPI- Communist Party of India  
 CPM- Communist Party of India (Marxist)  
 SWA- Swatantra Party  
 PSP- Praja Socialist Party  
 KMPF- Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party  
 SSP- Saayukhya Socialist Party  
 TD- Telegu Desam  
 LKD- Lok Dal  
 INC(Q)- Indian National Congress(Q)  
 SP- Socialist Party

(b) The figures in the first row corresponding to each party indicate the number of seats won; the figures in the first parenthesis indicate the number of seats contested; the figures in the percentages (%) indicate the percentage of votes polled by each party.

(c) Congress(Q) in 1980 and Congress(S) in 1984 and 1989.



## APPENDIX - II

### Interview with MADHU LIMAYE

A look at the background of efforts at opposition unity, is necessary before dealing with the 'two Janata Experiments'. I would begin with the victory of Lohia, Kripalani and Minoo Masani in the by-election for Lok-Sabha during 1963, when Nehru was still alive. Their victory symbolised the victory of the opposition as a whole over the Congress. About the same time, Lohia took concrete steps towards opposition-unity. Prior to that, no opposition floor co-ordination existed in Lok Sabha. A joint no-confidence motion was moved for the first time against the government. The Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) made two moves - efforts to enhance the radicalism of people through mass actions, on one hand; and the floor co-ordination inside the parliament, on the other (managing both the Jan Sangh and the Communists proved to be a tough job, though).

Then came the 1967 elections and SSP introduced electoral adjustments among the opposition parties, mainly the Left. Congress managed a bare majority at the Centre, while losing in many states. Credit should mainly go to the efforts of the opposition rather than the internal problems of the Congress. At the state levels, in some places even Jan Sangh and the Communist had tried to patch-up. SSP's efforts in Bihar, UP and Punjab, in particular, resulted in

the non-congress governments there. Between 1969-71, the Congress disunity had its reflection in the opposition disunity, and the momentum of opposition unity could not be sustained.

In the meantime, Indira Gandhi, the new Prime Minister had been able to cultivate a powerful social alliance - including the Harijans and the Minorities - for herself. She had a string of successes in early 1970s, when in the wake of the 1971 convincing victory in parliamentary elections, she also registered victories in the following state assembly elections, the Bangladesh War, and the famous Simla-Agreement in 1972. But soon she by-passed all institutions and party-structures, and immense concentration of power started.

In 1973, I was elected in 'Banka' (Bihar) by-election for Lok-Sabha, and after 1971, the opposition had finally achieved something to cheer about. The same year Kripalani convened a conference for opposition unity. The move for opposition unity soon gained momentum. The Gujrat and Bihar student's movement followed, where J.P. (Jayprakash Narayan) played an important role. Yet, it was the emergency which played the unifying role. It was actually the ban on RSS during emergency which forced the Jan Sangh to join in the unity moves. I personally feel that we would have succeeded (the first Janata Experiment) if only we had gone for a 'federal-party' instead of the total merger, because the

related organs of the concerned parties never merged together, for example, Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS). Factors behind the break-up of the 1977 Janata-Government were multi-causal: Firstly, the question of secular-nationality, secondly, the clash of constituent social interest, and thirdly, the personality (clash) factor. (M.L. substantiated each of these causes in some detail).

(When asked to comment upon his role in helping Charan Singh in splitting the party, as portrayed by L.K. Advani in his book, The People Betrayed). It was Raj Narain and not me who did it. He may not be blamed for this either. Did they not deny Raj Narain the entry back into Cabinet when Charan Singh was taken in? I repeatedly stressed that it was Raj Narain who defeated Mrs. Gandhi in Allahabad high-court (an immediate cause for Emergency), and also (electorally) in Rai-Bareilly, but I was not listened to. Then Raj Narain vowed to teach Morarji Desai a lesson. (M.L. then gave details of all that followed till the party split in July 1979). If I had my way, I would have made Jagjivan Ram, the Prime Minister, Charan Singh, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Morarji Desai, the President. I never encouraged Charan Singh's ambition, because I knew that Morarji Desai and J.Ram would not serve under Charan Singh, while Charan Singh and Morarji Desai would not serve under Jagjivan Ram. In fact we (the Socialists) did not open-up till 15th July, 1979.

In 1980s the R.S.S./Bhartiya Janata Party (earlier Jan Sangh) remained out, so it was no more a 'Janata Experiment'. Just like CPI, CPM, DMK they were simply a non-congress party. For most of 1980s, Janata Party and Lok Dal were not merging due to the personality clash between Charan Singh and Chandra Shekhar.

The second non-Congress government at the Centre (in 1989) was a sad commentary (of the fact) that non-congress parties unite only under a dissident Congressman. I agreed that in the given circumstances unity could only be attained under V.P. Singh, and also that a complete merger should not be tried. But given the role of human nature involved in power-politics, I had favoured a co-alition government, including both the BJP and the Left. After all, it would be too much to expect a party to be silent and supportive for five long years without itself being in the power or sharing the power. Issues involving Jag Mohan, the Reservation ('Mandal'), and Ayodhya, were prominent ones in rocking the V.P. Singh's government. Talking straight, V.P. Singh's election as the Janata Dal parliamentary party leader was by intrigue. His individualistic functioning also hastened the fall of his government. So not only BJP (withdrawal of support), but also the left and the V.P. Singh were responsible for the fall.

An alternative to Congress has to emerge in future, because the congress well find it very hard to regain its old glory.

## APPENDIX III

### Interview with GEORGE FERNANDES

While talking about the rise of the first non-Congress government at the Centre in 1977 I would go back to Dr. Lohia's effort at non-Congressism which came in the aftermath of Chinese aggression in 1962. It was in 1963 that Dr. Lohia propounded this whole idea of non-Congressism. The theory was that the Congress is ruling on a minority vote, and the Congress has been using this minority mandate to maintain the status-quoist polity of this country, its status-quoist economy and the status-quoist social order. If we really wanted a break from all this it was necessary for the non-congress parties to come together. Coming together ideologically was a proposition that Lohia did not advocate. Actually, being a very radical thinker, a socialist, and knowing the differences that existed between the various parties ideologically, he could not have possibly advocated it. However, he did two experiments - first, was for electoral purposes, the 'Chunawi-Talmel' (electoral adjustments) or seat-adjustments. This is now termed as the 'tactical-adjustments' in British-politics, attempted to prevent the splitting of the 'non-conservative' votes between the 'Liberals' and the 'Labour'. The second was the co-ordination among the non-congress parties in the parliament.

I was in jail, under preventive-detention, (4th April to 24th December 1963) when Lohia mooted this ideal. I felt strongly against it and wrote to Madhu Limaye accordingly from inside the jail. The idea of adjustments with the Jan Sangh etc. was not acceptable to me, and I said that we must oppose it and stand by our own policies and programmes. Yet Lohia persevered with this, and got the national executive to pass it. He, then, sought a debate on this in every party unit and in entire country. I was released on the very eve of the National-Convention of the Party in Calcutta. There, I opposed the resolution, and finally during the acrimonious debate over it, Lohia, himself, had to intervene to prevent its defeat. Only later did I discover that Lohia's thinking on it was absolutely right, and on the basis on that thinking the future of our polity got organised progressively.

### The 1967 Elections

In effect this was tried for the first time in 1967 elections, and the Congress almost lost its majority in the parliament elections. In fact, it was Communist Party's support which prevented the fall of the Central Government after the Congress split in 1969.

Following 1967 elections many non-Congress governments were formed in various states across the country. The 'Samyutka Vidhayak Dal', the United Legislative Parties,

that were found, were the first genuine experiments in the non-Congressism at the state level.

Unfortunately, Lohia died within six months of the elections, and with that the experiment started floundering. It started floundering because power was a great intoxicant at a certain level and it was also a temptation at another level, and most of our people fell prey to either of the two if not both. As a result we did not do any thing great or radical.

#### Mrs. Gandhi's Authoritarianism

It took ten years for us to re-build on that. Mrs. Gandhi showed her fascist teeth from 1973 onwards when 'Nav Nirman Movement' was launched in Gujrat, then in the Bihar movement, the Railway Strike etc. culminating in the emergency. If her fascist tendencies had not emerged in all this, then I am not very sure if 1977 (Janata-Experiment) would have been a reality. If there were no emergency, then it would have been difficult to get these parties together..

#### The Baraoda-Dynamite Case

The day emergency was declared I was in a little fishing-village called Gopalpur on the Seas in Orissa. I managed to escape the police dragnet that had surrounded me. I disguised myself as a fisherman and with the help of a friend, a trade union leader from P 'n' T (Post and Tele-

graph) who was posted in Behrampur, about 50 Kms or so from Gopalpur. I managed to escape on a Fiat-car sent over to Gopalpur. Having escaped, I went underground because I knew that it was a fascist order that we had to fight.

I came to the conclusion that while fighting a fascist order one would have to adopt various tactics and techniques which one would generally shun in a democratic situation. However, I set for myself a discipline that we shall neither kill nor injure any human being physically. This is what even Lohia, Jayprakash and others had set as their parameters during the 1942 underground movement. So we went back to 1942, when dynamiting government offices, blowing small bridges here and there had become acceptable. So, I was roaming about in the country in search of dynamite, and it was in Baraoda that I met some friends, who provided me with the where-withal to translate my ideas into actions. Then right across the country, I built a core of young people -- in fact any one who was ready to join the movement, and we kept fighting. We started blowing up railway tracks, bridges, buildings...., or any place where, we thought, the message would be given. The people would know that there are forces which are fighting the emergency. The world would get the message that the Indians have not accepted the Emergency silently. Finally, the government cracked the underground net-work and people were arrested. I was one of them. As the dynamite was picked-up in Baraoda, because some people in the very core of the movement in its first



phase where from Baraoda, and that the case was filed against us in Baroada, it came to be known as the 'Baraoda-Dynamite Conspiracy Case'.

#### Charan Singh Factor in first Janata-Experiment

A notable feature of the Janata Government at the centre in 1977 was that the middle-castes and the middle and rich peasantry were sharing the centre-stage for the first time. The fact that Charan Singh is generally equated with this political force needs a little clarification. Till 1967, it were the socialists, primarily, the SSP (Samyukta Socialist Party) led by Lohia who had been mobilizing the middle peasantry, the middle and the smaller castes, and in fact, they were considered as the Socialists' domain in North India. Charan Singh came out of Congress only in 1967 when Congress lost majority in UP State-assembly. In the Assembly, the Jan Sangh were the biggest group, we, the SSP came next and the PSP also had some members. But all-together we still did not have the majority and this is where the Charan Singh factor came up. It was with the formation of a coalition of the opposition known as the Samyukta Vidhayak Dal with Charan Singh as its leader, that he could be sworn as the Chief Minister. It was with the formation of the government that Charan Singh emerged as the leader of the middle castes and the middle and rich peasantry. Charan Singh had identified his constituency in the Socialists, who provided the backbone of his party, and the

disintegration of the socialist movement also started with that.

### The Disintegration of the first Janata-Experiment

Regarding the factors responsible for the fall of Janata Party government, I would say that primarily there was a clash of social and economic interests rather than the clash of ambitions, though the latter was also important. The intermediate castes were, then, coming into their own and Charan Singh was their mascot, providing voice to the assertions of their political ambitions. Having said this, I would add that there was also a clash of ambitions, but I would put it as the secondary factor. The lines on which the Lok Dal, the Janata Party and the Bhartiya Janata were re-created, substantiate clash of social interests in the 1977 Janata government.

Charan Singh's fulminations during 1978 (the Kanti-Desai episode, the open-criticism of his own government's economic policies, calling his own cabinet colleagues 'impotent' for not arresting Mrs. Gandhi) were more born out of frustrations than out of any long term political calculations. Frustration in the sense that here, he was a mass leader, with a base in the north, with an acceptance among peasantry in general, and yet he was being constantly side-tracked. His colleagues who, he thought should have been speaking on his side were playing safe. This was his frus-

tration. So, I would not attach much importance to what he was saying then. It happens in politics, as every statement made by a politician may not be a part of his/her long term planning.

### 1980-87

Between 1980-87, personally, I had never given up hope of opposition-unity. In fact, within days of the 1979-80 results (of parliamentary election) in which we lost, I told Chandra Shekhar that it is still not too late to put our house back in order. Within just a few days of Mrs. Gandhi's return a meeting was called at my residence. Many hot exchanges took place. I said that only they dwell in the past who have no present, and can not think and dream of a future. Those who want to make their future, would definitely take lessons from the past, but would not keep squatting in the past. By and by the unity-effect went on.

### The second Janata Experiment

In 1987, there was a debate in our national executive whether V.P. Singh was fit to lead the opposition or not. At a certain point of time, some individuals came to symbolise certain issues. People took very strong positions against V.P. Singh, and I was myself also not very enamored by him, as he kept swearing by Rajiv Gandhi. So, the day he took a position by cutting his umbilical chord with the congress, I told my colleagues that if there were no V.P.

Singh we would have to invent one today. As he was already there, I said that we should use him, and assimilate him.

The formation of 1977 Janata government was preceded by a lot of struggle and sufferings. There was also a lot of virginity in all of us, in the sense that most of us were not yet tainted by the evils of power. We were not looked upon as failures, and people had great hope in us. Then, we also had the towering personality of Jayprakash Narayan, who not only provided the moral leadership but also a reference point, a national consciousness. We did not have any of these in 1989. Another difference was that in 1977 Mrs. Gandhi's emergency had forced us to merge together as one party, without actually submerging our subsidiary organization (in case of BJP) which later created problems. In retrospect I believed that an honest co-alition was better than a forced union. So in 1989, I thought that we would be having an honest co-alition. It would be more rational effort in which the BJP at one level, the left at another level, and the Janata Dal at the third level could form an honest coalition and give a much better government to the country. After all, programmatically there were hardly any differences. Unfortunately, it was not to be. We never formed an honest co-alition. Some of us in Janata Dal had the ideal that we could now use certain specific programmatic issues on which we could do a hop-stop-and-jump, and that we did not need anybody then. But if we had, at that point of time, namely 1989, persuaded both the BJP and the Left to

become two honest partners in the co-alition, and carried on with the same programmes and policies on which our government functional and later fell, today we would have been running the country.

I would agree that the significant middle class did turn away from us after the Mandal Commission implementation, but the blunder did not lie in its implementation, but the blunder lay in not preparing and educating the people before the decision was taken. After all it was there in almost all manifestoes. In addition the BJP thought that we were using Mandal to side track them, to cut their base.

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## APPENDIX IV

### Interview with Hari Kishore Singh, the present spokesman of the Janata Dal

The significance of the given research, involving the two Janata Experiments, lies in the fact that an alternative to the Congress emerged twice, and on both occasions it remained short of the emergence of a two party system which would have given our democracy a healthier shape. The first congress-alternative was almost fully, the product of the imposition of the emergency and its repressions. The second, on the other hand, was conceived among allegation of corruptions at the top-levels, voiced primarily by V.P. Singh. Failure of both can be attributed to the internal bickerings.

(Upon asked about caste-calculations) Rather than the lapse in the manipulation of caste-arithmetic (while accepting the importance of caste factor in Indian politics), it was actually the greed of some important actors in both the experiments which led to their downfall. People who defected from the party, in case of the second experiment, to form government with the help of Congress had the greed and lust as their prime moving force. Some people had never accepted V.P. Singh as their leader, and they were trying to sabotage their own government all along. 'Mandal' issue was merely a pretext, which came handy to them, though they, too, had

supported the Mandal Commission's recommendations, in the first place.

It is true that the elite, the upper class, and the urban middle class had become hostile to Janata Dal, and it was not anticipated when the decision regarding the 'Mandal' was taken. Yet, the failure of the V.P. Singh's government was primarily the work of the insiders.

As far as similar possibilities in future is concerned, this time the gap before an alternative (at the centre) emerges will be less than a decade. Now, a major factor in Indian politics, the pre-dominance of Nehru-Gandhi 'dynasty', is gone. Therefore, our polity is in for a new realignment which would be cutting across party-lines. Soon the electorate is likely to have a choice between two clear cut alternatives, so the question of winning-over the people (keeping in mind the two failures) does not arise. The tags of congress and non-congress alternatives would be irrelevant in this scenario.

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