

**CONGRESS PARTY IN BIHAR: DECLINE IN
ELECTORAL BASE, 1967-1990**

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BIJENDRA KUMAR JHA



**CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHAR LAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI 110067, INDIA**

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DECLARATION

I, Bijendra Kumar Jha, declare that the dissertation entitled “Congress Party in Bihar: Decline in Electoral Base 1967-1990”, submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University, is my bonafide work. I further declare that the dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

Bijendra Kumar Jha

CERTIFICATE

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

CHAIRPERSON

SUPERVISOR

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABAS	Akhil Bharatiya Ashok Sena
ABA-SJM	Akhil Bharatiya Alp Sankhyak Jan Morcha
ABDBM	Akhil Bharatiya Desh Bhakt Morcha
ABHM	Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha
ABJS	Akhil Bharatiya Jan Sangh
ABSP	Akhil Bhartiya Socialist Party
AD	Apna Dal
AHFB	Akhil Hindi forward bloc
AHL	All Party Hill Leaders Congress
AJBP	Ajeya Bharat Party
AJPF	Akhand Jharkhand People's Front
AJVD	Akhil Jan Vikas Dal
AMB	Amra Bangalee
ANC	Ambedkar National Congress
AP	Awami Party
APP	Adarsh Political Party
AVAM	Arakshan Virodhi Arya Morcha
AVM	Antharrastriya Abhimanyu Vichar Manch
AZP	Azad Party
BADP	Bhartiya Adarsha Party
BBP	Bharatiya Backward Party
BCP	Backward Classes Party of India
BDC	Bharat Desam Congress
BED	Bharatiya Ekta Dal
BHJC	Bharatiya Jan Congress
BHJVP	Bharatiya Jan Vikas Party
BJC	Bihar Jan Congress
BJC(R)	Bhartiya Jana Congress (Rashtriya)
BJKVP	Bajjikanchal Vikas Party
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BJS	All India Bhartiya Jan Sangh
BJS	Akhil Bhartiya Jan SAngh
BKD	Bharatiya Kranti Dal
BKUS	Bharatiya Krishi Udyog Sangh
BMF	Bharatiya Momin Front
BMF	Bharat Mahila Swatantra Party
BPP	Bharatiya Pragatisheel Party
BPS	Bihar Prantiya Sudharavadi Party
BPP	Bihar People's Party
BRD	Bharatiya Rashtravadi Party

BRP	Chota Nagpur Bhumi Rakshak Party
BSP	Bhartiya Socialist Party
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
BVVP	Buddhiviveki Vikas Party
CNSPJP	Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas JAnta Party
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI (ML)	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
CPI (ML)(L)	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (Liberation)
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CNSP-JSD	Chota Nagpur and Santhal Pargana Jan Seva Dal
CSP	Congress Socialist Party
CVP	Champaran Vikas Party
DBM	Akhil Bharatiya Desh Bhakt Morcha
DDP	Doordarshi Party
DMKP All	Dalit Mazdoor Kishan Party
DMM	All India Dalit Muslim Minorities Suraksha Mahasangh
DS	Dalit Sena
FBL	All India Forward Bloc,
FBL (MG)	Forward Bloc (Marxist Group)
FBL (RG)	Forward Bloc (Ruikar Group)
FCI	Federal Congress of India
GGP	Gondvana Gantantra Party
GP	All India Gantantra Parishad
HJD	HUL Jharkhand
HJP	Hindustan Janta Party
HJS	Progressive Hull Jarkhand Party (Shibu Group)
HKMP	Hind Kisan Mazdoor Party
HMS	Akhil Bharatiya Hindu MAhasabha
HSD	Hindustani Shoshit Dal
ICJ	Indian Congress (J)
ICS	Indian Congress (Socialist)
ICS (SCS)	Indian Congress (Socialist Sarat Chandra Sinha)
IJP	Indian Justice Party
ILP	All India Labour Party
IML	Indian Union Muslim League
INC	Indian National Congress
INC(I)	Indian National Congress (I)
INC(U)	Indian National Congress (U)
IND	Independents
IUML	Indian Union Muslim League
JAP	Janata Party
JD	Janata Dal
JD(S)	Janata Dal (secular)
JD (U)	Janata Dal (United)

JDP	Jharkhand Disam Party
JHP	Jharkhand Party
JHP	Jai Hind Party
JHSP	Janhit Samaj Party
JJKMC	Jai Jawan Jai Kisan Mazdoor Congress
JKD	Jharkhand Party
JKM	Jawan Kisan Morcha
JKNPP	Jammu And Kashmir National Panthers Party
JKP	All India Jharkhand Party
JKPP	Jharkhand People's Party
JLF	Jharkhand Liberation Front
JMM	Jharkhand Mukti Morcha
JMM (M)	Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (Marandi)
JMM(S)	Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (Soren)
JNMK	Jai NavJawan Jai Mazdoor Kisan Party
JNP	Janata Party
JNP (JP)	Janata Party (JP)
JNP (SC)	Janata Party (SC)
JNP (SR)	Janata Party (Secular)-Ch.Charan Singh
JP	Janata Party
JPJD	Jai Prakash Janata DAI
JPP	Jharkhand Peoples Party
JS	Jan Sangh
KD	Kisan Desham
KDVP	Krantikari Samajwadi Party
KMBP	Kisan Majdoor Bahujan Party
KSP	Kosal Party
KSVP	Krantikari Samajwadi Party
KVSB	Kamjor Varg Sangh, Bihar
KVSP	Kosi Vikas Party
LD	Lok Dal
LJP/LNJP	Lok Jan Shakti Party
LKD	Lok Dal
LKD (B)	Lok Dal (B)
LKSS	Lok Sewak Sangh
LPSP	Lokpriya Samaj Party
LSD	Lok Sewak Dal
LSM	Akhil Bhartiya Loktantrik Alap Sankhayakjan Morcha
LSWP	Loktantrik Samajwadi Party

LTC	Loktantrik Congress
LTSM	Loktantrik Samajwadi Morcha
MCOR	Marxist Co-ordination
MCP	Marxist Communist Party of India
MCPI(s)	Marxist Communist Party of India (S.S. Srivastava)
MPP	Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party
MUL	Indian Union Muslim League
NBNP	Navbharat Nirman Party
NCP	National Congress Party
NDP	National Democratic Party
NDPF	National Democratic Peoples Front
NLP	National Loktantrik Party
PBI	Proutist Bloc India
PF	Indian Peoples Front
PHJ	Bihar Prant Hul Jharkhand
PHJP	Progressive Hul Jharkhand Party
PMSP	Pragatisheel MANav Samaj Party
PSP	Praja Socialist Party
PSSS	Proutist Sarva Samaj SAMiti
PSSP	Proutist Sarva Samaj Party
REP	Republican
RGD	Rashtriya GARib Dal
RJD	Rashtriya Janata Dal
RKP	Rashtriya Kisan Dal
RKSP	Rashtriya Krantikari Samajwadi APrtY
RKVP	Rashtriya Kamjor VArga PArty
RLD	Rashtriya Lok Dal
RLSM	Rashtriya Lok Seva Morcha
RPI	Republican Party of India
RPI(A)	Republican Party of India (A)
RRP	Akhil Bhartiya RAmrajya PArishad
RSBP	Rashtriya Swabhiman Party
RSM	Revolutionary Socialist Party of India (Marxist Lenini)
RSMD	Rashtriya SAMta Dal
RSP	Revolutionary Socialist Party
RVP	Rashtravadi Janata Party
SAP	Samata Party
SBSP	Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party
SCF	All India Scheduled Caste Federation
SHD	Shoshit Dal
SHS	Shivsena
SJP(R)	Samajwadi Janata Party (Rashtriya)
SJTP	Samajik Jantantrik Party

SMM	Soshan Mukti Morcha
SSP	Sanyukta Socialist Party / Socialist Party
SOP(L)	Socialist Party (Lohia)
SP	Socialist Party
SSD	Soshit Samaj Dal (Akhil Bhartiya)
SSD	Soshit Samaj Dal
SSP	Sanyukta Socialist Party
SUC	Socialist Unity Centre of India
SWA	Swatantra Party
SWJP	Samajwadi Jan Parishad
UGDP	United Goans Democratic Party
UKS	All India United Kisan Sabha
WPI	Workers Party of India

Introduction

The fourth general election in 1967 brought significant change in Indian politics, especially in the party system. The Congress, the dominant party with characteristics of a catch-all party, broke down, and the first phase of the party system which was one party dominant system had come to an end. During this period, the pace of fragmentation of the party system increased a process that turned dissidence and criticism within the party to defections outside the party. Such fragmentation continued even after the elections; whereas the Congress lost power in five states in the elections, Congress government were toppled from three more states after the election, following further defection from the legislature party in these states.¹ In the elections in 1967, the Congress lost power in Tamil Nadu where regional party, the DMK, came to power. In the other four states where the Congress was replaced were West Bengal, Bihar, Punjab and Orissa. In all these states, “united front” composed of parties all the way from the Marxist Communist to the Jan Sangh became united to grab the political power of the states.

In all these states, catch-all opposition formula have been adopted to overthrow the Congress from power that is why the Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (united front) was made up of the Jan Sangh, Socialists, Swatantrata, local parties and Congress defectors- this was the key element that made a numerical majority possible for the united front. At one level, this period reflects the decline of the Congress and rise of the Other Backward Class (OBCs) that changed the scenario of the Indian politics, especially in the state of Bihar where Yadavas, the Kurmis and Koeris emerged as dominant lower castes. These castes occupied an intermediate position in the social hierarchy, below the “twice born” and above the Dalits. The Congress strength was eroding since independence in Bihar and the party ousted from power in fourth election in 1967. Since 1990, the Congress never returned to power and their electoral base declined in the state. Janata Dal replaced the Congress with full majority in 1990 in the state assembly and thereafter it has lost the status of even being the opposition party in the assembly.

This research is an attempt to trace the inter-linkages between decline of electoral base of the Congress and rise of the Other Backward Class (OBCs) in Bihar

¹ Rajani, Kothari. *Politics of India*. Orient BlackSwan: New Delhi, 1970, P. 181.

from 1967 to 1990. This research will locate the question that how the Congress declined due to rise of the lower castes politics and why the Party remained in the clutches of the upper castes dominance? It would be significant to look into the matter that how social institution like caste, turned into political institution and their rule of number mattered in the Indian democracy after application of universal adult franchise. How the instrument of the free and fair election changed the socio-economic status and their empowerment took place in the parliamentary democracy? All these questions are interlinked with one-another to trace the decline of electoral base of the Congress. The focus of this research would be on the major policies such as land reform that have been implemented and failed gradually, and the factionalism, decline of broad based ideology, upper caste dominance, rampant defection and the rise of the OBCs political consciousness about their strength in the political structure of the state. In such matter Bihar was a unique state where studies of this matter is either very limited or absent. Therefore, topic has been opted for the study to analyze the matter in detail.

The history of the national movement in Bihar antedates of the Congress organization². The Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee (BPCC) was established in 1908 as a provincial branch of the Indian National Congress. Early leadership of the Congress was mostly from upper caste especially Kayasths and Bhumiars followed by Rajputs and Brahmins. There was fraternity among the Hindu and Muslim leaders in the BPCC. M. Mazharul Haque was the first president and at the same time he was also president of Muslim League. The BPCC took active part in the Champaran and Non-Cooperation movement. These movements transformed the Congress from an elite based group into mass based organization. Parallel to the Congress, Provincial Muslim League was also established in Bihar and the third important political organization emerged in the state out of various peasants and farmer movement, apart from Congress and Muslim League, was the Kisan Sabha in the leadership of Swami Sahjanand. The peasant issues were taken by Kisan Sabha which was the sole political organisation of the farmers and peasants movement. However, Kisan Sabha recognized Congress organization as a sole representative of Indian masses.³

² R. K, Barik. *Politics of the JP Movement*. Radiant Publishers: New Delhi, 1977, P. 16.

³ R.K , Barik. *Land and Caste Politics in Bihar*. Shipra Publication, New Delhi, 1996 , P. 91.

When the Congress Party came in power in 1937 in Bihar, its consolidation as well as fragmentation took place at the same time. Consolidation was much stronger in the pre-independence period than fragmentation. In contrast, fragmentation increased and became stronger in post-independent Bihar than consolidation in the Congress. Land was the main issue of conflict to resolve when the Congress took power in 1937 due to zamindari system in the province. When demand for redressing the grievances of peasants was placed before the government by the Kisan Sabha and the Socialist in the Congress, large number of Zamindars inside the Congress made it difficult for the Ministry to introduce any change in status quo regarding the issue of land which had affected the Zamindari system. Regarding Zamindari system and Tenancy Act, K.K. Dutta argued that “the most important legislative measures to the credit of the Congress Ministry were the Bihar Tenancy (amendment) Act, which was intended to afford relief to tenants of Bihar from hardships they had to bear under an iniquitous system of land tenure. The Zamindars were totally opposed to it from its inception. But the pass of this bill became easier as a result of an agreement between the Zamindars and the Congress, affected largely through the effort of Shri Rajendra Prasad and Mulana Abul Kalam Azad, both of whom were eager to mitigate the rigours of chronic social malady”.⁴

The peasants’ demand of land reform was ignored by the Congress due to its internal conflict that culminated in clear cleavage between Kisan Sabha and the Congress government. Zamindars urged the government to take stern steps against peasant leaders under public Safety Act. The BPC passed a resolution on 14th December 1937 asking “all Congress workers and sympathizers to keep themselves aloof from the activities of the Kisan Sabha in Bihar.”⁵ The peasantry looked up to the Congress, but the Congress was reluctant to alienate the landed interests on which it depended so heavily in so many ways.⁶

The Kisan Sabha, alienated from the Provincial Congress, organized themselves independently. It came closer to the Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party of India to enhance the volume of peasant movement. The socialist leader of Congress such as Rammanohar Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan, Abdul Bari,

⁴ K.K. Dutta. *Freedom Movement in Bihar*. Government of Bihar Publication. Patna. Vol.2, 1957, Pp. 308-309

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ R.K. Barik . *Politics of the JP Movement*, op., cit. P. 34

Puryanandan Sharma, Shyam Nandan Sinha, Rama Krishna Benipuri, Ambica Kant Sinha and Kishori Prasanna Sinha alienated from the Congress. These leaders started joining the movement launched by the Kisan Sabha. The association of the CSP with the Kisan Sabha helped to give the former body a stronger ideological basis while, at the same time, strengthening the links of the Kisan Sabha with the Congress⁷. So CSP was a bridging force between the Congress and the Kisan Sabha. The CSP continued to recognize the Congress as the principle existing mass organization of diverse elements seeking national liberation. The Socialist Party also underlined the urgent need to develop and broaden the Congress base and bring it under the influence of revolutionary Socialism⁸.

The consolidation of the Congress was due to alignment with the Socialist Party which wanted to bring the Congress near to the masses. Congress had another support from the Gandhian group. The real fragmentation and weakening of the Congress started in post-independence era. When both the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) and the Gandhian group left the Congress due to the changing nature of the Party, its fragmentation and decline of the electoral base started. However it was still overwhelmingly supported by diverse sections of the society. Now Congress organization transformed from a movement of organisation to a complete political party managing to acquire power.

Bihar was the first state in post-independent India, where government legislated Bihar Land Reform Act in 1947 and re-legislated in 1950. But the state legislature, controlled by essentially conservative forces, was more concerned with the status quo than implementing any law that could initiate progressive changes to positively influence the relationship between the cultivating peasantry of the land and the Congress. Instead the Congress leadership enacted legislation which was tailored to the interest of the ex-intermediaries and the super-landlord, that is, the state.⁹

Another development within the Congress was that factional politics rapidly grew in order to get power of the government and it was the only ambition remained for the prominent leaders once they got rid of British Raj. Group politics dominated

⁷ Vinita, Damodaran. *Broken Promises: Popular Protest, Indian Nationalism and the Congress in Bihar, 1935-1946*. OUP: New Delhi, 1992, P. 101

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ F. Tomasson Jannuz. *Agrarian Crisis in India*. Sangam Books: New Delhi, 1974, P. 20.

the Congress along the lines of caste. The alliance and re-alliance within or outside the party made the political ecology a complete reflection of the social order in which caste played an important role and leaders sought to promote supporters and lieutenant of their own caste.

Ramashray Roy observes that, “caste is, indeed, there at every step in party (especially Congress) grouping: nomination of candidates by parties, in election campaign... caste was in the mind of those who organized the campaigning. The general assumption was that the caste or community to which a person belonged would determine his voting. The contestants classified the voters in their respective constituencies on that basis and kept the figure in the mind while selecting workers for electioneering. Caste leaders were sent or brought to those areas where the majority of voters belonged to the caste of particular leader. Two of the Congress leaders in Bihar belonging to the caste of Yadavs and Kurmis travelled widely in the state making speeches in the area which had a majority of those castes. Overt propaganda always avoided an emphasis on caste factor but every candidate was sure of getting the support that could be secured by their caste leaders through careful selection of campaigning area which was made under the cover of darkness. The nature of caste alliances at the state level used to explain each voter. In voting, caste-alliances were very effective.”¹⁰ Therefore, caste played an important role in selection, campaigning and support of the particular leader and mobilizing people along the lines of caste.

Upper caste dominance in the social order was reflected in the political structure of the state. The Congress was in the hands of upper caste dominance and the spaces for lower caste were very few. The representation of the lower castes, especially the Dalits were negligible in the Congress government before independence and this structure remained in the post-independence period of Bihar politics. At the leadership level, between 1934 to 1946 (except in 1936 and 1937 when Congress contested provincial election under the expanded franchise of the 1935 India Government Act), not even a single person belonging to the lower caste, was a

¹⁰ Ramashray, Roy. ‘Selection of Congress Candidate: The formal criteria’ in Peter Ronald DeSouza and E. Shridharan (eds.) *India’s Political Parties*. Sage Publications: New Delhi, 2006. Pp. 341-352.

member of the BPCC and similarly, expect for one or two years during this period, there was no representation of the untouchables or the tribal¹¹.

Therefore the Congress, more or less, remained the party of upper caste dominance at leadership level and had support from all sections of the society due to its movement character. The factionalism developed among the leaders of the party along the lines of caste and these factions were from upper caste leadership, and accordingly there emerged a bi-polar factionalism which later transformed into multi-polar factionalism. The dominance of the upper caste in the Congress depended on the leaders and educational status of the particular caste. In the early days of the party, Kayasthas dominated the scene at leadership and other spheres. The dominance of Kayasthas caste was soon challenged by Bhumihar Caste, and followed by Rajputs and Brahmins.

The great leader such as Sachidanand Sinha and Rajendra Prasad was from Kayastha caste, who dominated the sphere of politics in Bihar. They also dominated the sphere of education where they encouraged the recruitment and promotion of people belonging to the same caste group as theirs. The early leadership in the BPCC and in the freedom struggle was provided by this caste. Soon, their dominance was challenged by Bhumihar caste and they took up the leadership of the party. Shri Krishan Sinha, the first Chief Minister of Bihar from 1937 to 1961 (except in 1939-45 when the Congress resigned from the state assembly due to World War II), the Chief Minister having longest time period of his office, was from Bhumihar caste. During his regime, perennial factions persisted on the basis of caste between S.K. Sinha (Bhumihar) and Annugrah Narayan Sinha (Rajput) for their caste and personal based dominance. The other dominant caste such as Brahmin and Kayastha took position within the two factions. K. B. Sahay, a Kayastha leader, was a staunch supporter and lieutenant of S. K. Sinha. When S. K. Sinha, a Bhumihar, declared his successor, Mahesh Prasad Sinha (also from Bhumihar caste) Chief Minister, then K.B. Sahay sought help from another caste to become the chief minister of Bihar. The Brahmin faction supported A. N. Sinha, a Rajput leader, and sought support in turn from them. Brahmin dominated the Congress since Emergency till its decline. Party leadership

¹¹ Francine R. Frankel has used the term Dominant Caste in her article 'Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar: Breakdown in Brahminical order' | Francine R. Frankel and M S A Rao (eds.): *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: The Decline of social order*. OUP, New Delhi, 1989 , P. 73

had never gone to lower castes and Congress Ministry was dominated by the upper castes.

The purpose of the Study is to trace out the linkages between declines of the Congress and emergence of OBCs politics in Bihar. It is said that politics in the Parliament passes through the political street of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, which means that political activity in such states have direct impact on national politics. The rise of the lower castes politics in Bihar and U.P. has unbalanced the politics of the Congress at centre. This research work had several limitations regarding resources as well as time. In such a situation, my purpose of the study is to reveal the nature of the Congress in Bihar as well as political ecology in the State.

This dissertation has been divided in four chapters which analytically explain the politics of the Congress in Bihar. The first chapter 'Historical Background: Congress before 1967' explains the contradiction which existed in Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee (BPCC) since its birth, especially from 1937 when first Congress government was formed in Bihar in 1937. In this chapter, I have argued that the Congress was eroded by a broad ideology which were amalgam of socialist, Gandhian and centrist which made it an organization of movement concerned over broad social, economic and political issues. The socialist and Gandhian group left the Party and the Congress remained a complete political party which was concerned over governmental power. The second argument in this chapter is that the Congress remained an exclusive party of upper castes who fought among themselves for personal ambitions and democratization of the Party could not occur. The castes affiliation and personal ambition of the leaders in the BPCC led to bi-polar factionalism between S. K. Sinha (Bhumihar) and A.N. Sinha (Rajputs). The consolidation and fragmentation of the Congress in Bihar simultaneously took place. Third argument in this chapter is that the Congress failed to implement the socio-economic policy properly, especially land reform. Bihar was the first state in India which legislated the Bihar Land Reform Act in 1947 but did not implement it due to strong opposition within the Party. The Congress remained a political conservative party in a liberal and parliamentary democracy.

The second chapter entitled as 'The Congress in Coalition and Opposition, 1967 to 1979' which explains the nature of Congress when it was in opposition and in

coalition in Bihar. This time bi-polar factionalism transformed into multi-polar along the lines of caste and all these castes were 'twice-born'. Factionalism was so rampant in BPCCC that M. P. Singh called it 'negative factionalism' which means that there was no consensus within the leaders of Congress Legislative Party. Cooperation among the factions became very difficult, if not impossible, in the Party. In 1967, the Congress did not win the majority of seats in the state assembly. On the other hand, though it was the largest party in Bihar, Congress could not succeed to form a coalition government due to opposition of B. N. Jha faction who wrote letter to the governor that Mahesh Narayan Sinha does not hold the support of all the member of the Congress. Congress failed to form a coalition government with the support of the other parties and independents. In contrast, Samayukta Socialist Party mobilized all the parties ranging from the Left parties to the Rightist Parties and formed Samayukta Vidhayak Dal (SVD), a united front against the Congress, and formed the government. The main argument in this chapter is that the Congress failed to maintain the discipline within the party leaders which culminated in negative factionalism and rampant defection. The Party failed to recruit the lower castes into the party and give them their due and in the process to democratize the party along the proportion of the population of the lower castes. At the same time the governance of the state deteriorated by the Congress which led to massive protest by students, union leaders, the opposition parties culminated in Bihar movement. The JP movement eroded the strength of the electoral base of the Congress in Bihar. The de-democratization of the BPCCC led to strengthening of the Opposition.

Third chapter titled as 'Revival of the Congress, 1980 to 1990' deals with the explanation of the Congress rule in Bihar. The main argument in this chapter is that the Congress struggled with crisis of governability in the state. In ten years of Congress Rule, Chief Ministership had been changed six times to manage the crisis but failed to do so. The Congress also struggled with the crisis of leadership due to decline of intra-party democracy and monitoring of the BPCCC by Central High Command. In the last five years, four times leadership was changed from Brahmin to Rajput to Brahmin to manage the law and order situation, to control crime and castes conflict. It failed to control communal violence in Bhagalpur which was the worst kind of communal frenzy and madness in Bihar since independence.

The fourth chapter traces the rise of OBCs politics and the principle of non-Congressism which was developed by Rammanohar Lohia. The chapter is titled as 'Rise of the Other Backward Class Politics and Decline of the Congress'. The chapter tries to explain the reasons why backward caste, which has more than one half of the population in the state, felt alienated from the Congress. The rise of the OBCs politics accentuated the decline of the electoral base of the Party. In the post 1990s, the Opposition was united against the Party and was more democratic than the Congress. The BPCC was in complete disarray which resulted in the decline of the Party.

My hypothesis is that the Congress Party faced twin-political forces. One was from upward- the dominance of upper castes that could not democratize the Congress and led to factionalism along the lines of caste finally resulting in erosion of intra-party democracy and cohesiveness. The downward forces with the rise of backward caste politics, which consists of more than half of the society, mobilized under common issues such as reservation and challenged the Congress for its political hold within the state.

The methodology which has been opted for this dissertation is historical, descriptive, and analytical. This dissertation primarily traces the causes and consequences of inner contradictions on the decline of the Congress Party in Bihar. The decline of Congress started in late 1960s when non-Congress government came in power with policy of 'catch-all opposition' and its decline accentuated by the rise of Other Backward Classes politics. The work tries to reveal Congress's internal conflict and its exclusive policy with electoral base in a multi-cultural society, like India. This dissertation focuses on politics of Bihar and downfall of the Congress from 1967 to 1990.

Chapter: I

Historical Background: Congress Party

Before 1967

Till March 1912, Bihar was administered by Bengal along with Orissa. The new intellectual class in this decade wanted separate province of Bihar, so that Bengali dominance would end and provinces people would get opportunities provided, however in limited number, by the British Government. A section of young lawyers organized, under the leadership of Sachidanand Sinha, a leading barrister and liberal leader, was publishing “The Biharee” weekly newspaper in English from Patna to express their views and the another journal which echoed their voice was “ The Kayastha Messenger”.¹ British Government agreed its demand and created a separate province of Bihar and Orissa from Bengal in 1912 and further Orissa had been carved out from Bihar in 1936. This act of division of separate province necessitated due to rise of sub-nationalism² in the region and the formation of Utkal Sammelani³ and other bodies to press for the demand of separate province of their own. From 1st April, 1936, Bihar became a separate province under the Governor.

The first political organisation which took shape in the province was the Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee, the provincial branch of the Indian National Congress.⁴ Early leadership of the Congress was mostly of upper caste especially the distinguished lawyers, like the Hindu elite in occupation and Class origins⁵ and early days of Congress were marked by close fraternity among Hindu and Muslim leaders. Gandhi’s visit to Champaran in 1917 and non-cooperation movement made Congress from an elite based debating group into mass based organisation in India, especially in Bihar. Congress took shape of movement organisation in which all section of the society have enthusiastically participated in the freedom struggle against British Raj. Parallel to Congress, Provincial Muslim League was also established in 1908 and the leader of the League initially worked in harmony with the Congress leadership and in

¹ Shashisekhar, Jha. *Political Elite in Bihar*. Vora & Co publishers private limited, Bombay, 1972, p-16.

² Bailey, F.G’. ‘Politics in Orissa’, *EPW*, 1959. He has explained the rise of Oriya Nationalism in the region.

³ Utkal Sammelani was an organization under which people of Orissa organized a movement for separate province.

⁴ Shashisekhar, Jha. *Political Elite in Bihar*. P- 32.

⁵ K.K, Dutta. *Freedom movement in Bihar*. Government of Bihar Publication, Patna Vol 2, ch-4, 1957.

some cases same individual were simultaneously active in both the organisation.⁶ Third important political organisation which emerged out of various peasants movements was the Kisan Sabha, in the leadership of indomitable Swami Sahjanand who gave a strong voices and a platform to express peasant and farmer's suffering in day to day activity against Zamindar's exploitation that were without any organisation in the formal sense. In Bengal and north Bihar Indigo Planters, mostly Europeans, were treating peasants as dumb cattle subjecting them to inhuman torture. From time to time violent agitation occurred in one area to another area but brutally suppressed by the government. Planters had to support the Raj and also the Zamindars who had settled their portion of land with European planters. When Congress met in its annual conference in 1916 in Lucknow, a party activist from province, Raj Kumar Shukla, requested Gandhi to come and solve the problem of the Indigo plantation and Gandhi gave an assurance to solve the problem of the farmer. In 1917, Gandhi travelled to Champaran to investigate the grievances of the peasants and found "the village were insanitary, the lanes full of filth, the well surrounded by mud and stink and the courtyards unbearably untidy. The elder people badly needed education in cleanliness. They were all suffering from various skin diseases."⁷ He made it clear that his sole purpose of coming to Champaran was to investigate if any social injustice that might exist, with special reference to tinkathia system.⁸ Gandhi succeeded in his ambition to abolish the exploitative tinkathiya system and this extolled movement was the first Satyagrah launched by Gandhi in India. This struggle was essentially a middle class peasant movement and reaction against the exploitative nature of Planters' Raj. It was directed mainly against European planters and not against the rich landed interests who were equally, or sometimes more ruthless in their exploitation of the peasantry.⁹ From the later part of 1920s, the peasant issues were taken by Kisan Sabha which was the sole political organisation of the farmer and peasant movement. However, Kisan Sabha recognized Congress organization as a sole representative of Indian masses.¹⁰

⁶ M. Mazharul Haque was the first president of the Bihar Provincial Muslim League in 1908 and he was also active in Congress.

⁷ Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p421.

⁸ Tinkathiya system was introduced in Bengal and north Bihar by which every farmers were compelled to cultivate indigo in its third part of land and sell it to Britishers on marginalized price and there were complex process of exploitation of the farmers by the Planters and Zamindars.

⁹ Tirumal, Mundargi. Congress Party and Zamindars: Collaboration and Consultation in Bihar, 1915-1936, *EPW*, 1990.

¹⁰ R.K, Barik. *Land and Caste Politics in Bihar*. Shipra Publication, New Delhi, 1996. P-91.

When Congress came in power in 1937 in the province, land was the main issue of conflict to resolve in front of these three political organizations. When demand for redressing the grievances of peasants was placed before the government by the Kisan Shabha and the Socialist in the Congress, large number of Zamindars inside the Congress made it difficult for the Ministry to introduce any changes in status quo regarding the issue of land which had affected the Zamindari system.

K.K.Dutta observed that:

“The most important legislative measures to the credit of the Congress Ministry were the Bihar Tenancy (amendment) Act, which was intended to afford relief to the tenants of Bihar from hardships they had to bear under an iniquitous system of land tenure. The Zamindars were totally opposed to it from its very inception...But the passes of this Bill became easier as a result of an agreement between the Zamindars and the Congress, affected largely through the effort of Shri Rajendra Prasad and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, both of whom were eager to mitigate the rigours of a chronic social malady.”¹¹

The farmer’s demand of land reform was ignored by Congress that culminated in clear cleavage between Kisan Shabha and the government and now the government was threaten with violent mass upsurge. Zamindars urged the government to take steps against the leaders of the Peasants Movement under Public Safety Act. The Provincial Congress Committee in Bihar passed a resolution on 14th December 1937 asking ‘all Congress workers and sympathisers to keep themselves aloof from the activities of the Kisha Shabha in Bihar.’¹²

Trade Union movement was another development in south Bihar where newly industrial city had been established such as Bokaro, Jamshedpur, Dhanbaad where wide spread of unrest was taking roots in the factories and coalmines. During 1937-38, large number of unrest and strike took place in these newly industrial cities.¹³ Prominent Congress Socialist leaders, such as Abdul Bari, organized important trade union in the most part of the south province. Apart from Abdul Bari, Jayaprakash Narayan, Basawan singh, Yogendra Shukla, Ram Briksh Benipuri, Bishwanath

¹¹ K.K. Dutta. *Freedom Movement in Bihar*. Government of Bihar Publication, Patna. Vol.2 p-308-309

¹² Ibid. p-317-318.

¹³ Ibid. p328.

Mathur, Kishori Prasad, Habibur Rahaman, Radha Mohan, Baleshwar Singh and others were most prominent socialist leaders active on the trade union Front. In the later period Left took the charge of trade union movement along with socialist leaders in the south Bihar and made an ample base among the industrial workers and labourers.

An important political event occurred during this period that was the introduction of the Government of India Act 1935 in which political system provided a federal structure of the government in which governor was responsible to act with the advice of ministers responsible to the provincial legislature which came into effect in 1937. Congress decided to contest election and form the government. Franchise was also extended and nearly 14%¹⁴ of the total population were eligible to cast their vote. Congress was the major party which contested this election and overwhelmingly supported by the voters, and other party which contested election were Depressed Classes League (an organization of the depressed caste), Triveni Sungh (a party of Guwala, Kurmi and Koeri caste) and these were political alliance of the Congress. The Muslims were divided into four different groups- the Ahrar Party, the Independent Party, the United Party and the Nationalist Muslims in the Congress.¹⁵ However, Muslim League was the main opposition Party in the assembly. Congress voted for the power and formed the government and after a short reign it dissolved in 1939 as per notice of the AICC. The next election held in 1945 in which Congress again formed the government and main opposition came from the Muslim League.

Transfer of Power and Congress

The most important development in the pattern of Bihar politics was that, Congress lost its characteristics of an organized movement and became a complete political party and its social and political base shrunk in the independent India, especially in Bihar. Two organisations withdrew its support from Congress due to ideological differences, which had greater contribution in the broadness of party as a movement. First, the Gandhian group led by Jayaprakash Narayan who still believed in Gandhian philosophy of constructive program and subsequently joined 'Sarvodaya'¹⁶ movement

¹⁴ Shashisekhar, Jha. *Political Elite in Bihar*. P-43.

¹⁵ Ibid. p-43.

¹⁶ 'Sarvodaya' literally means upliftment of all. Mahatma Gandhi advocated the philosophy of Sarvodaya inside the Congress. He wanted that Congress should dissolve itself after independence and

and left the Congress. Second, the Socialist group led by Ram Manohar Lohiya who seems Congress is a party not working for farmers and peasants and a party of landlords and Zamindars which work for the interest of few. The Congress leadership hastened the departure of the Socialists by first asking that the CSP drop the name of “Congress” from its name so as not to exploit the title, by refusing to include leading members of the CSP on the working Committee of the Congress, and finally by passing an amendment to the party constitution which banned any Congress member who was a member of another political party. In March 1948 the CSP withdrew its support from the Congress and formed the Socialist Party.¹⁷ Among all faction within Congress CSP was most organised group which decided to go alone in upcoming election. Still Congress had its unchallenged hegemony; it fast eroded with the passes of time.¹⁸

The another development within the Congress was that factional politics grew rapidly in order to get power of the government and it is the only ambition remain for the prominent leaders once they get rid of British Empire. Group politics dominated the party along the line of caste. The alliance and re-alliance within or outside the party made political structure that was the complete reflection of the social order in which caste played a vital role and leaders sought as staunch supporters and lieutenant for their own caste and this was claimed for all leaders in the post-independence of Bihar. On study of Bihar politics observe that:

“Caste is, indeed, there at every step in Party (especially Congress) grouping: in nomination of candidates by parties, in election campaign...Caste was in the minds of those who organised the campaigning. The general assumption was that the caste or community to which a person belonged would determine his voting. The contestants classified the voters in their respective constituencies on that basis and kept the figure in the mind while selecting workers for electioneering, caste leaders were sent or brought to those areas where the majority of voters belong to the caste of the particular leader. Two of the Congress leaders in Bihar belonging to the caste of Yadavas and Kurmi travelled widely in the state making speeches in the areas which

retain its constructive program and movement character. After Gandhi's death, Vinoba Bhave in A.P and Jayaprakash Narayan in Bihar devoted to this movement.

¹⁷ Marcus.F. Franda .The Organizational Development of India's Congress. *Pacific Affairs*, 1962, P-254.

¹⁸ Girish, Mishra and Braj Kumar Panday. *Sociology and Economics of Casteism in India: A Study of Bihar*. Pragati Publication, New Delhi, 1996. P-278.

had a majority of those castes. Overt propaganda always avoided any emphasis on caste factor but every candidate was sure of getting the support of his or caste. What was to be achieved, was the support of other castes, and their support could be secure through their caste leaders, careful selection of campaigning workers were made and real campaign was done under the cover of darkness. The nature of caste alliance at the state level used to explain to each voter. In voting, caste- alliances were to a great extent effective.¹⁹ Thus party once known for the people who were marginalised, deprived and excluded from the mainstream now become faction ridden and platform for power manipulation. Organization once known of movement now turned into party of conflict and tussle of power not for the party but for the self.

In the village, caste leaders and Malik (master), who generally belong to the class of prosperous land holding peasantry, worked as a 'vote-bankers'. These leaders used their economic and social power to translate into political power, mobilizing support for candidate whom they favour. Coercion and intimidation, direct or indirect, are not entirely absent in persuading economically and socially dependent voters to vote for a particular candidate. In this way, election results were the reflection of social and economic power and their caste interaction and re-interaction. Upper caste was dominant in the social order and also dominated the political structure of the state that left marginal space for the lower caste, especially for the depressed castes. Their representations were marginal in the government before independence and this remained continued in post-independent Bihar politics. At the leadership level, between 1934 to 1946(except in 1936 and 1937 when Congress contested provincial election under the expanded franchise of the 1935 Constitution), not even a single person belonging to the lower caste, was member of the B.P.C.C and similarly, except for one or two years during this period, there was no representation of the untouchables or of the tribal.²⁰ The patron-client relationship reflected in political scene that were dominant in the social order which were the determining factors of rights and duties for the twice-born as well as for the depressed caste.

¹⁹ Chetkar, Jha and Shree Nagesh Jha. Some aspect on Bihar Politics, *EPW*,P-321-322.see also Roy, Ramashray. Selection of Congress Party Candidate: The Formal Criteria. In *India's Political Parties* (eds.). Peter Ronald deSouza and E. Sridharan. Sage publications, New Delhi, 2006.

²⁰ Francine R. Frankel. 'Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar' in *Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A.Rao* (eds.) *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: The Decline of Social Order*. New Delhi, OUP, 1989, p-73.

Table 1.1

Caste Composition of the Bihar Congress Pradesh Committee, 1934-1962 (in percentage)

Caste	1934	1938	1942	1946	1950	1954	1958	1962
Upper Caste								
Brahmins	----	7.15	14.28	6.66	12.50	10.53	14.28	14.29
Bhumihar	15.38	7.15	21.43	20.00	12.50	21.05	23.81	28.56
Rajputs	7.70	21.42	28.58	26.68	27.5	21.05	19.05	14.29
Kayasthas	53.84	71.25	73.34	73.34	75.00	57.89	66.67	61.92
Sub-total	76.92	71.42	73.34	73.34	75.00	57.89	66.67	61.92
Lower castes	----	-----	-----	-----	12.50	21.05	14.28	14.28
Scheduled Caste	---	----	7.15	----	6.25	5.26	----	----
Scheduled Tribe	----	-----	-----	-----	-----	3.26	-----	-----
Sub-Total	----	-----	7.15	-----	18.75	31.57	19.04	19.05
Muslims	23.08	14.28	21.41	20.00	6.25	5.26	9.53	14.29
Not known and Others	-----	14.30	----	6.66	-----	5.26	4.76	4.76
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source – Nagesh Jha , Caste in Bihar Politics, EPW, VOL.5 No-7, 1970.

Above chart clearly shows the under-representation of the lower caste especially of Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe in the Bihar Pradesh Executive Committee between 1934 and 1962. The upper caste dominance was perennial in the party and factionalism was along the line of caste rather than any coherent ideology. The number of the upper caste was always more than fifty percent as shown in the table. The upper castes dominance remained in the Party since its birth in 1908 to its decline in 1990s. The society required democratization of the institutions due to gradual democratization in itself. The application of universal adult suffrage offered importance to the number of votes rather than any kind of social hierarchy. The grant

of political equality demanded social and economic equality. The political equality came into clashes with the economic and social inequality.

The Congress remained in the clutch of the upper caste since its birth to its decline that depended on the advancement in the education and connection with the AICC. In the first few decades of the BPCC, the Kayasth castes had dominance in the education as well as politics. The great leader of the freedom movement such as Sachidanand Sinha and Rajendra Prasad was from this caste. They organised freedom movement against the British Raj and provided early leadership in the BPCC. Soon, their dominance was challenged by Bhumihaar caste and they took the leadership of the Party. Shri Krishan Sinha, the first Chief Minister of Bihar from 1937 to 1961 (except in 1939-1945 when Congress reigned from the state assembly due to World War II), the longest Chief Minister of any state from Congress. During his regime, perennial factions persist on the basis of caste between S.K. Sinha (Bhumihaar) and Anugrah Narayan Sinha (Rajputs) for their personal and caste based dominance. The dominant caste such as Brahmin and Kayasth took position within the two factions. K.B Sahay, a Kayasth leader, was a staunch supporter and strong lieutenant of S.K. Sinha still his benefits from the Chief Minister. When S.K Sinha, a Bhumihaar leader, declared his successor of the Chief Minister post to Mahesh Prasad Sinha, from Bhumihaar caste then K.B Sahay sought to help of another caste for his support to become Chief Minister.

This competition remained continuous in the Party and bi-polar faction converted into multi-polar factionalism and dominance. And later Brahmin dominated the Party since emergency to its decline. It is significant to note that Party leadership never gone to the lower caste and Congress Ministries always dominated by upper castes.

The tribal people of the Chhotanagpur region remained exclusively eliminated from the party structure and that is why when Adivasi Mahasabha turned into political party i.e. Jharkhand Party, it got overwhelming support of the tribal as well as non-tribal in the south Bihar. Tribal population is concentrated in the southern part of the state which is predominantly a hilly and forested plateau. Geologically the area is one continuous unit of the Chhotanagpur and Rajmahal plateau, Manbhum, Singhbhum and the Santhal Parganas. While tribal population formed nine percent of the total

population of the state, the representation of the tribes were nearly negligible in the Congress as well as in the state system. Some of the districts such as Ranchi (60% population are tribes), in the Santhal Pargana (44%), and in Hazaribagh (36%), the tribal population is quite high. There are as many as 45 tribes with varying population inhabiting in these districts where Oraon, Munda, Marandi, santhals, Pahariya or Maler are the main important tribes. These tribes are in touch with non-tribes for a long time and the cultural interaction between Adivasi and non-Adivasis produced an inevitable result. The main source of change in the tribal culture were urbanization, industrialization, social welfare agency , missionary activities, hats and markets, education , community development programme and such others that affected their way of life. Their contacts with Hindus and Missionaries changed their way of life and politicized them to a certain extent to assert for their rights and voice against exploitation of their community by the British official, Zamindars, moneylenders and others. They rebelled against exploitation and oppression of the tribal people by the 'Dikus'(means outsiders) and in the course of revolt they had been led by great tribal leaders such as Birsa Bhagwan, Jatra Bhagat, and Buddha Bhagat. Their nature of leadership was traditionalist and religious as we can analyse with their surnames Bhagwan (means God), Bhagat (servant of God) and they received popular Messiahsism and charisma by their followers. These followers fought with bow and arrow with the British forces as their leader had directed them, that British attack would go fail because God is with them. These religious leaders rebelled against Zamindari, moneylenders, British administration and other oppressors and also tried to revitalise their own community. The history of the adivasi uprisings in the Chhotanagpur region of Bihar shows that these traditionalist and religious leaders stood mainly for two things: armed rebellion against the ruthless exploitation by landlords, usurers, traders, police and other governmental officers, and revitalization of their society through certain reforms and practices in their everyday life and activities. These leaders developed a deep sense of hatred towards 'Dikus' and British government officers when they came in contact with them. They had observed the attitudes and behaviour of 'Dikus' and government officials towards their community.

The second phase seems to have started with the emergence of the Jharkhand Party as a political organisation which included all the tribal and non-tribal of the Chhotanagpur plateau. The Jharkhand Party owes its genesis to a student organization

stood up in Hazaribagh district. This party received all benefit of the ignorance of the tribal in the Chhotanagpur region by the Congress Government from 1937 to 1952 and made strong demands of the separate state for the tribal within Indian sovereignty. In the post-independent Bihar, Jharkhand Party was the most organised and most effective opposition in the Bihar state assembly. Faction within the Jharkhand Party emerged along the line of individual leadership (as in Congress) and top leader of the Party decided to join the Congress. In September 1963, Jharkhand Party merged with Congress.

Election, Congress Party and Factional Politics

Elections changed the political structure of the Indian state and it has greater impact on Indian society. However, the first election had been introduced in British India but voting right was limited to particular section of the society pertaining to Landlords, Zamindars, educated class and people who used to pay taxes. Adult franchise had been given to all in one stroke and there was suspicion that how democracy would succeed in such a vast society where people are illiterate and poor. A veteran Madras editor complained that 'a large majority will exercise vote for the first time: not many know what the vote is, why they should vote, and whom they should vote for; no wonder the whole adventure is rated as the biggest gamble in history.'²¹ Before 1967, Bihar experienced three state assembly elections as well as three general election in which Congress remained a dominant party²². In subsequent elections, the electoral base of the Congress gradually decreased, and in 1967 party experienced first crack in the dominant position which began in Bihar. The main theme is that why this decline has happened in Hindi heartland than other parts of India? What were the determining factors that contributed in this declining electoral base? Which section of the society was being erased from this electoral base and why? These are some elementary questions that need to be answered very carefully.

To answer these questions, we need to focus on social composition of the society and subsequently attached electoral base of the Congress in Bihar before 1967

²¹ Ramachandra, Guha. *India after Gandhi. The History of the World's Largest Democracy*. Picador India, 2007, P-147.

²² Rajani, Kothari. 1967. *Politics in India*. Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi. Rajani Kothari has used the term dominant party system in which Congress was in dominant position at centre as well as in the state acted as party of dominance and party of pressure.

and also focused on changing nature of this social engineering that led to decline in electoral base. There was difference in the social structure, within Brahminical caste frame work of the society and the structure of the Congress. In the social structure, needless to say, Brahmin caste was the supreme or at the top of social structure followed by Rajput, Vaishya and Dalit at the bottom. In the political structure of the state, Dominant²³ caste made contribution in the separation from Bengal and took the position in the political engineering due to advancement in the education. In the early stage Kayastha caste came as a dominant caste and played a key role for separate state but very soon their supremacy had been challenged by Bhumihar political leader on account of which 35 percent of seats in 1935 were captured by the Bhumirars in Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee.²⁴ Kayastha had 28 percent and Rajputs had 28 percent in BPCC. Both the Bhumihar and Rajputs took to caste politics. Caste became such an important factor, once Chairman of the B.P.C.C. Rajendra Prasad, with a sense of repentance, writes: “we had to consider the caste of a person while deciding about the candidate. It was not a matter of satisfaction for Congress. But due to the exigencies of situation we could not avoid it. It was a matter of great shame and sadness that we could not forget caste. We had to think that if we do not choose a man of particular caste from a particular area it would have adverse effect on that particular caste and ultimately on the chance of successes in election. Further we had also taken from caste in proportionate number so that we can please all the caste. This was an outrage for nationalist organization, but we had to do it.”²⁵ This role of dominant caste remained unchanged in post-independent Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee. The intra-party faction along the line of caste came in front after death of the first chief minister of Bihar Shri Krishan Sinha in 1961.

The First Four Assembly Election and Congress Party: In the post-independent Bihar, first election had been held in 1952 as first General Parliamentary election also held in which Congress System or one party-dominant system evolved in Indian politics. It is a system in which a single “party of consensus” (i.e. the Congress) occupies the dominant, central position, with minor opposition parties

²³ Francine R. Frankel has used the term Dominant Caste in her article ‘Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar: Breakdown in Brahminical order’ In Francine R. Frankel and M S A Rao (eds.): *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: The Decline of social order*. OUP, New Delhi, 1989.

²⁴ Rajendra, Ram. Caste, Class and community in Bihar Politics in research-in progress paper. “History and Society” Center for Contemporary studies, NMML, New Delhi, 1995, p-9.

²⁵ Ibid, P-10.

acting upon it from the margin as “party of pressure” without providing an alteration of power.²⁶ Seats of the Congress consistently decreased till 1969. Party won seats 239 out of 330 in first state assembly election in 1952, 210 seats out of 318 in second election in 1957, 185 seats out of 318 in third election in 1962, 128 seats out of 318 in fourth election in 1967 and 118 seats out of 318 in fifth state assembly election in 1969. However, difference in the percentage decrease was little as 41.4 percent in first, 42.1 percent in second, 41.4 percent in third, 33.1 percent in fourth and 30.5 percent in fifth election. On the other hand, seats of the opposition parties such as Socialist party, Praja Socialist Party, Swatantrata Party, Jharkhand Party, Communist party, Jan Sangh had increased at the expense of Congress. After the result of fourth state assembly election in 1967, Congress transformed from a governing party to opposition party. There were following reason for this transformation; a) the intra-party faction in the Congress that remain one at structural level but at functional level it was more than one party that means sometimes one, sometimes two and some times more than two that fostered for the opposition party to propagate; b) the socio-economic policy failure that gave chance to opposition party especially to Socialist and Praja Socialist Party to grow; c) the lack of strong leader that could reduce the personal difference within the Party; d) strong oppositional leader such as Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohiya, and Karpoori Thakur and others had played a key role in conveying the government failure to the people. This trio-leader was against the policy of the government since first ministry in the state.

Factionalism has always been a part of the Congress in pre- as well as in post independence period.²⁷ In the pre-independence period, factionalism was very limited due to socio-economic homogeneity, as members were drawn from upper caste, English educated, urban elites and the integrative forces²⁸ released by the freedom movement. Its leadership primarily came from the Kayasthas, who had received

²⁶ Rajani Kothari, “The Congress ‘System’ in India”, in Rajani Kothari (eds), *Party System and Election studies*, op. cit., pp1-18.

²⁷ M. P Singh. *Cohesion in a predominant Party: The Pradesh Congress and Party Politics in Bihar*. S. Chand & Co (Pvt.) Ltd, New Delhi, 1975, P- 59.

²⁸ Ramashray, Roy. ‘Intra-Party Conflicts in Bihar Congress’. *Asian Survey*, Vol-6, No-12, *University of California Press*, 1966, P- 707. He argued that division, differences and tension within the Congress did not reflected in intensified due to its primary goal to achieve national freedom and different movement such as Non-cooperation, Civil-disobedience movement and Quite India movement were integrative force within the party that kept the party in very limited factionalism.

English education earlier and in large number than other castes of the state.²⁹ As the socio-economic background of the Congress leadership started diversifying with increasing political mobilization of the other section of the society, such as, Bhumihar, Rajputs, and Brahman who followed suit in taking English education and modern profession and came to realized the advantages of the political participation, soon the Kayasthas dominance was challenged by Bhumihar. By the 1930s three principal articulate caste groups had emerged in the Congress: the Kayasthas, The Bhumihar, and the Rajputs.³⁰

Tension in the top-ranking leadership in the Bihar Congress developed when the Congress formed a ministry in 1937.³¹ Attempts to grasp top positions, favouring one's own supporters in the selection of Congress candidates for contesting elections, and nominations, created an atmosphere of envy and jealous which gradually eroded mutual confidence, trust, and solidarity among top-ranking leaders.³² In such environment of political conflict that was much associated with social conflict and interests, "many Congress workers... had started assessing their services in terms of rewards in the form of membership of legislative assembly, municipal or district board or at least a place of honour and power in a Congress Committee."³³ By that time two major factions had crystallized in the Congress one was organised under eminent leader Sri Krishan Sinha, a prominent Bhumihar leader and the other under Anugrah Narain Sinha, a strong Rajput leader. Both had great influences among leaders and people as well. The faction was so strong that it took three month to decide who would be leader of the party and finally A.N. Sinha decided not to take the chief minister post and finally S.K Sinha had been selected as the head of the party on 8 July 1937 in Congress Working Committee meeting in Wardha.³⁴ A. N. Sinha became the deputy leader of the Congress Legislative Party and held the key

²⁹ Ramashray, Roy. 'Politics of Fragmentation: The Case of Congress in Bihar', in Iqbal Narain (eds.), *State Politics in India*. Meenakshi Prakashan. Merrut, 1967, P- 418.

³⁰ Chetkar, Jha. 'Caste in Bihar Congress Politics', in Iqbal Narain (eds.) op.cit. P- 575-587.

³¹ Gilbert, McDoanald. *Bihar Polity, 1908-1937: The Bihar Congress and the Political Development of the Region*.

³² Ramashray, Roy. "Intra-Party Conflicts in Bihar Congress." *Asian Survey*. Vol-6, No-12, University of California Press, P- 708.

³³ Rajendra, Prasad. *Autobiography* .1961. Asia Publishing House, Bombay, P- 431.

³⁴ Yadunandan, Prasad. *Biography of Dr. Rajendra Prasad*. Bihar Hindi Granth Academy, Patna, 1984. P- 92.

portfolios such as finance, labour, public works, supplies and price control, local-governance and health department in the S. K. Sinha ministry.³⁵

After the 1946 elections, conflicts over the leadership of the newly elected Congress Legislative Party again developed between the “ministerialist” S. K. Sinha and the “dissident” A. N. Sinha factions. Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, sent by the Congress High Command to mediate between the two leaders, managed to secure unanimous selection of S. K. Sinha and A. N. Sinha as leader and deputy leader respectively.³⁶ This bi-polar factional structure within the Congress remained unchanged till independence and turned up into multi-factional structure in post-independent Bihar as given in the chart below:

Chart of faction

Congress Factions with the Date of Their Emergence

(The caste of the leader appears within the brackets).

1937: (a) S.K Sinha’s faction (Bumihar Brahman).

(b) A.N. Sinha’s faction (Rajput).

1953. “Centrist faction (no recognised single leader).

1957: (a) S.K. Sinha’s faction as of 1937 (a) above.

(b) Binodanand Jha’s faction (Brahman).

(c) S.N. Sinha’s faction (Rajput).

1961: (a) B.N. Jha’s faction as of 1957 (b) above,

(b) S.N. Sinha’s faction as of 1957 (c) above.

(c) M.P. Sinha’s faction (Bumihar).

(d) K.B. Sahay’s faction (Kayastha).³⁷

This factional politics did not decrease in post-independent Bihar Congress. Instead it increased after the formation of Congress Ministry in 1952. It became so intense that High Command intervened by sending three central ministers from Bihar to patch up differences, but they failed and it was only the intervention of the Prime

³⁵ Jagdishchandra, Jha. *Biography of Dr, Annugrah Narayan Singh*. 1988. Bihar Hindi Granth Academy. P- 82.

³⁶ M. P Singh. *Cohesion in a Predominant Party: The Pradesh Congress and Party Politics in Bihar*.1975. S. Chand & Co (Pvt.) Ltd, New Delhi, P- 61.

³⁷ Ibid, P- 61.

Minister and national Congress President Jawaharlal Nehru which led to the same unanimous elections as in 1946.³⁸ There were other caste groups who supported either S. K. Sinha group or A. N. Sinha group but the position of the Bhumihar group was strong due to personality and post of S.K. Sinha. They were associated due to community, some time personal gain from the governmental power structure in the state. Once they found dissatisfaction from one group, they defected from the group either to assimilate in another group or make a another group within the Party, for example, the formation of the Congress ministry in 1946 disappointed some of S. K. Sinha's non-Bhumihar followers who expected to be rewarded with ministerial posts for their support and after 1952 Congress Ministry these dissatisfaction enhanced when M. P. Sinha, a Bhumihar and a close relation of S. K. Sinha, included in the Ministry of Congress Government that indicated the Chief Minister's intension to promote his own caste men in the power position, to leave the group and make another. This action of the S. K. Sinha compelled the non-Bhumihar follower; especially the Kayasthas group headed by K.B. Sahay who was staunch supporters of Bhumihar Group and especial lieutenant of S. K. Sinha, to leave the group and assimilate in other or make the "Third One". By 1953 almost all the important non-Bhumihar supporters of the Chief Ministers had left this camp. They could not be absorbed into the Rajput group to which they had been opposed from very beginning, thus a "Centrist Group" emerged which directed its entire energy to discrediting M. P. Sinha who was the members of the Centrist Group and was responsible for their grievances³⁹. This Centrist Group was essentially against the Bhumihar faction and gave birth to bi-polar factional structure into multi-factional structure politics within the Party.

In 1953 the Centrist Group presented a long memorandum to the Congress High Command bringing specific charges of corruption, nepotism, maladministration, etc., against M. P. Sinha. An enquiry was conducted but, as J. N. Sinha, one of the prime movers of the group, claimed, everything was huse-hused. It is interesting to note in this connection that main aim of the group has been to "purify the Congress and wage a crusade against casteism and factionalism". It is, however, incontrovertible that the Group started as a reaction to the doing of M.P. Sinha and its

³⁸ The Indian Nation, March 11 and 12, 1952 which quoted in M P Singh's, P- 61.

³⁹ Ramashray, Roy. 'Intra-Party Conflicts in Bihar Congress'. *Asian Survey*. Vol-6, No-12, University of California Press, 1967, P- 711.

sole purpose was to defame him so that his political career may be eclipsed. Even many Bhumihar also did not quite approve of M.P. Sinha's leadership.⁴⁰ It is strongly believed that Sahay was at the back of this group.⁴¹

For the settlement of differences in the Bihar Congress a meeting was held on 11 January, 1954 with Jagjiwan Ram that finalized S. K. Sinha as a President of the BPCC and A. N. Sinha as the general secretary. Factionalism emerged in Bhumihar group between M. P. Sinha, a newly elected leader by Chief Minister due to his close relationship, and K. B. Sahay, a kayastha leader within S.K. Sinha group and very trusty to him. In the mean time an incident worth mentioning had occurred in the second week of August 1955. A violent clash took place between the students and the staff of the state transport in Patna, the Capital of Bihar. There was conflict of opinion in the cabinet over the appointment of the tribunal to enquire into whether the police firing was justified. M. P. Sinha, the Transport Minister, was opposed to setting up the Tribunal. But, finally, the Tribunal was appointed.⁴²

The K.B. Sahay, the leader of "Centrist Group", consisted of Mathura Singh, R. L. Singh Yadav, Abdul Ghafoor, Amt. Ram Dulari Singh and L.N. Jha. After the Patna incident, dissatisfied men of S.K Sinha faction like Sarangdhar Singh, Shayama Prasad Singh, Ram Binod Singh, Sardar Harihar Singh and Jankinandan Singh joined the hands of Centrist Group. The fictional politics within the Bhumihar factions became so intense that national high Command intervened in 1955 when Congress President, U. N. Dhebar and the AICC General Secretary, Sriman Narayan visited Patna to reduce the differences among the factions of the Congress. Dhebar emphasized that the Congressmen had to function united as a group and to do little self-introspection by assessing their own work. The first loyalty of the Congressmen had to be towards their organization and they had to approach national problems in an accommodative spirit. S. K. Sinha and A.N. Sinha also spoke for unity.⁴³

This high command intervention to reduce the difference was in fructuous and meanwhile rivalry between M.P. Sinha and K.B. Sahay, the Centrist Group leader pervaded all sphere of Congress activities. In the selection of candidate for the

⁴⁰ Shree Nagesh, Jha. "Caste in Bihar Politics". EPW, 1970, P- 341.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² A. N Sinha. Mere Sansmaran. Suman Prakashan, Patna, 1961, P- 53.

⁴³ Bameshwar, Singh. "*Congress Ministries under the High Command Shadow*". Janki Prakashan, Patna, 1988, P- 87.

General Elections in 1957, for instance, many members of the Centrist Group were not recommended for Congress tickets. As a result, they left the party and formed the Jan Congress. But the grand finale came with the defeat in the elections of both M. P. Sinha and K.B Sahay, who, as the Congress report confirmed, worked against each other.⁴⁴

In 1957 A. N. Sinha died. His faction underwent some enfeeblement but did not lose its existence. A resolution was moved and adopted in BPCC. A. N. Sinha's son S. N. Sinha, in collaboration with H. N. Mishra and B. C. Patel, two young and staunch supporters of A. N. Sinha and, from time to time, receiving the patronage of L.B. Shastri, Jagjiwan Ram and G.B. Pant, kept A. N. Sinha's faction alive.⁴⁵ S.K. Sinha's man A.Q. Ansari was the president of BPCC and its member executive tried to weaken A. N. Sinha's faction.⁴⁶

The death of A.N. Sinha and S.K. Sinha in 1957 and in 1961 respectively finally marked the transformation and intensification of factional politics from bipolarity to multi-polarity. In 1957 the dissident A. N. Sinha faction further broke into two distinct factions broadly on the basis of Sinha's Rajput organised under leadership of S.N. Sinha (son of S.N. Sinha) and non-Rajput followers of A. N. Sinha's faction, organised under leadership of Binodanand Jha, a Maithil Brahman.

In the contest for the Congress Legislative Party leadership after the demise of S.K. Sinha, two broad sub-groups emerged in the party. The first was a sub-coalition of faction led by Binodanand Jha, Sahay, and S. N. Sinha drawing supports mainly from the Brahman, the Kayastha, the Rajputs, the majority of lower caste Hindus and Muslims MLAs. The other was not so much a sub-coalition of factions but primarily the Bhumihaar faction by M.P. Sinha, with some limited followers among the lower castes, which found itself isolated. As the leader of the majority group, Binodanand Jha became the second Chief Minister of Bihar.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Ramashray Roy. 'Intra-Party Conflicts in Bihar Congress'. *Asian Survey*. Vol-6, No-12, University of California Press, P- 712.

⁴⁵ Bameshwar Singh. '*Congress Ministries under the High Command Shadow*'. Janki Prakashan, Patna, 1988 P- 88.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ M. P Singh. *Cohesion in a predominant Party: The Pradesh Congress and Party Politics in Bihar*. 1975. S. Chand & Co (Pvt.) Ltd, New Delhi, P- 63.

With the election of Jha as a Chief Minister, casteism entered a new phase in Bihar Congress as he started distributing patronage to Brahmin for the important posts.⁴⁸ Tension within the ministerial sub-coalition developed from the start as Sahay grew apprehensive of the growing influence of S. N. Sinha, the leader of the Rajput faction, in the government. Sahay and Sinha soon withdrew their support from Jha over question of distributing of fishes and loves of office. Jha tried to counter act them by inducting the Raja of Ramgharh and the supporters of Jharkhand Party in the Congress.⁴⁹ But Jha could not succeed in facing Sahay-Sinha faction and finally retired under the Kamaraj Plan⁵⁰ to take up organizational work in the party and K. B. Sahay took the charge of Chief Minstership of Bihar. He was champions of land reform in Bihar but could not go ahead due to obstruction of two landlord factional group within the party consist of M.P. Sinha and S.N. Sinha. When Sahay could not erode the influence of Rajput-Bhumihar landlords, he devised a new method to fight them by mobilizing the backward castes. One of the outstanding leader emerged during this period under his guidance was Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav, the leader of the single largest caste in Bihar the Yadav.⁵¹ Sahay appointed R.L.S. Yadav as a full-fledged minister in his government and gave him the portfolio of Public Works Department (PWD) and also won over Kurmi leader Deo Sharan Singh, the Chairman of the Vidhan Parishad (the Upper House of the Bihar Legislature).

Sahay could not succeed to keep the ministerialist sub-coalition united under his leadership and failed to prevent the mutually hostile M.P. Sinha and S.N. Sinha factions from falling apart. In his frustration he took anti-people measures which resulted into massive anti-Congress movement and the ousting of Congress from the

⁴⁸ Hiranmay Dhar, Shaibal Gupta, Nandadulal Roy and Nirmal Sengupta. 'Caste and Polity in Bihar' in G. Omvedt (eds.) *Land, Caste and Politics in Indian States. A Project of Teaching Politics*. Department of Political Science, Delhi University, New Delhi, 1982, P- 108.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Proposed by k. Kamaraj, the Chief Minister of Madras and subsequently president of AICC, a plan to "revitalize" the Congress Organization. It suggested that leading Congressmen in government should voluntarily step down from their ministerial posts and offer themselves for full time organizational work. All Congress Chief Ministers and all Union Ministers resigned in response to the Congress high Command. Six Chief Ministers and six Union Ministers were relieved to do organizational work. Under Kamaraj Plan two leaders were dropped from ministerial posts- the Central Minister Jagjiwan Ram, and Chief Minister Binodanand Jha. See Stanley Kochanek, *The Congress in India: The Dynamics of One-Party Democracy* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1968, P- 77-80.

⁵¹ Hiranmay Dhar, Shaibal Gupta, Nandadulal Roy and Nirmal Sengupta. 'Caste and Polity in Bihar' in G. Omvedt (eds.) *Land, Caste and Politics in Indian States. A Project of Teaching Politics*. Department of Political Science, Delhi University, New Delhi, 1982, P- 108.

power in 1967.⁵² This led to erosions in the party structure. This pre-eminent useless factional politics was without any ideological base and only for community, caste and personal goal which short-lived. During this period, ideological foundation of Congress declined and became an exclusive party expected for gaining power.

Once Congress was ideologically very strong party, an amalgamation of socialism and Gandhism, that attracted the wide range of people from all sections of the society in Bihar. Leaders had great “national capital”⁵³ that declined in post-independent Bihar. Socialist left the party in 1948 and Gandhian group led by Jayaprakash Narayan also left the party for sarvodaya movement, subsequently the Congress ideology declined and culminated in useless factional politics led to declining the electoral base in Bihar.

My second argument in this chapter is that Congress failed to fulfil the aspiration of the people due to its socio-economic policy failure in the state. In 1961, opposition had introduced no-confidence motion in Bihar Legislative Assembly in which following allegation had been imposed against Congress Government: a) government has betrayed the socialism that was in motive to govern the society. The Third Five Year Plan has included five aim for the government in which reduction of inequality is at the bottom of the plan that shows the government is not concerned for poor. The living standard of the people is declining day by day and inequality is increasing that is against the norms of socialism; b) the government officials were indulged in corruption. Government was not forming anti-corruption commission for reducing corrupt practices in the state. Congress government cannot alleviate corrupt practices in the state; c) government did not build bridge on Ganga River at Mokama which is connecting link between North Bihar with rest of the state; d) government failed to provide free and compulsory education to all children of age group 6 to 14, which shame on Congress governance. It has been directed by Indian constitution that within 10 year, all children will get free and compulsory education and accordingly this promise could have been fulfilled till 26 January, 1960. It could not be fulfilled. Government have sworn on the name of constitution whose sole authority is in the hands of people of the state. Congress government has betrayed the constitution and

⁵² Ibid. P- 108.

⁵³ The life of the leader during freedom struggle was for the people of nation and they had great sense of self-sacrifice in the interest of the people. This activism declined drastically after independence in all over India and especially in Bihar.

people of the state; e) the schools that existed in the state have always faced lack of resources such as teacher, classes, toilets etc. Teachers are not ensured for their life insurance, compulsory provident funds and pension. Government should extend all facilities to the teachers which are already given to the government officials; f) government has failed to reduce unemployment problem in the state. It had no extensive programme for employment reduction; g) government was not able to make available minimal food for all people in the state. The food scarcity in the state is perennial since 1945, which was 3 lakh ton and still it is 3 lakh ton. This government do not deserve to remain in power on the name of people.⁵⁴

An institution of local governance, so called Panchayati Raj, had been established through 'Bihar Gram Panchayati Raj Act' in 1947 in Bihar in which upper caste dominated the institution, supported by Congress government, did not foster services to the down trodden people of the State. Bihar was the victim of feudal exploitation and oppression. Zamindar was free to exploit the people on his will and mostly lower castes become the victim of that exploitation. Zamindari Abolition Bill was introduced in Bihar Legislative Assembly in 1947 but due to pressure of landlord from different parts of the state, dominated by Rajputs and Bhumihar, some of the close relation of Chief Minister S. K. Sinha, Bill did not pass. Finally Land Reform Act was passed in 1950 but failed due to enormous pressure from four largest landlords in the state includes the Darbhanga Raj, the Hathwa Raj, the Dumraon Raj and the Ramgarh Raj all were upper caste landholders. The lower caste people started anti-Congress stands in the coming election due to Congress's obsession with upper castes.

In 1966-1967 Bihar faced food crisis that accentuated the anti-Congress sentiment in the state due to government's inability to cope up with the situation. The principal measure adopted by the authorities to cope with situation included the import of food grains, mostly provided by P.L 480 wheat imports from the United States, via the central government; the distribution of wheat through fair price shops; and the institution of hard manual labour schemes to provide employment and purchasing power to the poor and landless, who had no other local work because of

⁵⁴ Ashok Kumar Sinha. *Jan Nayak Karpoori Thakur*. Vishal Publication, Patna, 2006, P- 43-49.

the severe decline in agriculture operation.⁵⁵ On this critical situation the factional group within the Congress further fragmented on distribution of party tickets to contest the 1967 elections. The Bihar Congress leaders deadlocked on the candidate list, which had to be prepared in Delhi. Disaffection with the results, however, was great, and thousands of Congress workers deserted the Party, many to join existing opposition parties or to find a new party, the Jan Kranti Dal.⁵⁶

The socialist and the Gandhian leaders always criticized the Congress stand in the state, such as, Ram Manohar Lohiya, Karpoori Thakur and Jayaprakash Narayan. In 1967, for the first time important opposition parties came together and demonstrated resilience and ability to forge a united front against the Congress. The architect of this new strategy of “non-Congressism” was the Samyukta Socialist party leader Ram Manohar Lohiya, who in an obvious bid to match the “catch-all” character of the Congress put forward the thesis of catch-all opposition.⁵⁷ The defeat of the Congress in the 1967 election led to the installation in March of a non-Congress coalition government with former Congressmen, defected from the party and made Jan Kranti Dal with Kamakhya Narayan Singh, Mahamaya Prasad Sinha, became Chief Minister of the state, leading an unstable coalition of six parties.⁵⁸ Karpoori Thakur became deputy Chief Minister who was the supreme leader of the Praja Socialist Party and did hard labour to defeat Congress. During election campaigning the popular slogan were following:

Congress Raj Mitana hai- Socialist Raj Banan Hai

Lohiya Karpoori ki Lalkar- Badalo Badlo Yah Sarkar

Sau Se Kam Na Hajar Se Jayada, Samajwad Ka Yahi Takaja

Angregi Me Kaam na Hoga, Fir Se Des Gulam Na Hoga⁵⁹

(We have to replace the Congress Raj with Socialist state,

Lohiya-Karpoori calling to replace this government,

⁵⁵ Brass. Paul R. ‘The Political Use of Crisis: The Bihar Famine of 1966-1967’. *The Journal of Asian studies*, Vol.45, No-2, P- 247.

⁵⁶ Ibid. P- 251.

⁵⁷ M. P Singh. *Cohesion in a predominant Party: The Pradesh Congress and Party Politics in Bihar*. S. Chand & Co (Pvt.) Ltd, New Delhi, 1975, P- 71.

⁵⁸ Paul R. Brass. ‘The Political Use of Crisis: The Bihar Famine of 1966-1967’. *The Journal of Asian studies*, Vol.45, No-2, P- 251.

⁵⁹ Ashok Kumar Sinha. *Jan Nayak Karpoori Thakur*. Vishal Publication, Patna, 2006, P- 58.

Not lower than hundred and not more than thousand, this is principal of Socialism,

Work would not be in English, and country would not be colonized again.)

Although Jayaprakash Narayan resigned from active politics and joined Sarvodaya movement in Bihar but at the time of election campaign he actively joined the hands with Karpoori Thakur and appealed people to support PSP. Before 1967 election six major opposition parties formed United Opposition Front to defeat the Congress in Bihar. In sum, combination of intraparty conflicts, opposition unity, and some immediate pre-election incidence, failure of socio-economic policy measure, decline in the institutional ideology within the Congress led to debacles in 1967 election.

This chapter has explained the changing nature of the Congress in Bihar since its very inception. Once the party was known as the party of movement and concerned for all the sections of the society which later transformed into a complete political party which are only concerned with the management the power in the state. Party was dominated by upper castes and particular caste dominated the BPCC at a time, however for limited period, followed by other castes. First the BPCC was dominated by Kayasthas followed by Bhumihar, Rajput and Brahmins which led to rampant factionalism in the Party. On the one hand Congress was engulfed into factionalism and personal ambition of the particular leader and on the other hand socialist politics in the state became stronger and gradually the consciousness among the lower castes also consolidated through political movement launched by SSP, PSP, BKMP, CPI, CPM and the other parties. The Congress was ousted from power in 1967 for first time in the electoral history of India. The ousting of the Congress from power was due to the policy of non-Congressism and catch-all opposition which was proposed and spread under the guidance of Rammanohar Lohia and Karpoori Thakur, the two giant socialist leaders in Bihar.

Chapter:II

Congress Party in Coalition and Opposition, 1967-1979.

The 1967 elections were a severe setback to the Congress, not only ousted from power in several states, including Bihar, the year witnessed a tremendous weakening of its internal strength, with constant dissension and acrimony in the ranks, rampant factionalism and tide of defection. At central organization of Congress, two groups within the party first Young Turks¹ belonging to Socialist forum and second the Syndicate² came in conflict due to complex power relationship. The Young Turks supported the leadership of Indira Gandhi and criticized the state bosses and blamed them for the election debacles. The syndicate, on the other hand, began to feel that the Prime minister was moving away from the party control and trying to build up an autonomous center of power.

From the time the Congress first assumed the responsibilities of public office, there has been constant conflict between the government and organizational wing of the Party. This traditional conflict between these two wings accentuated in 1967 when Party lost its hold in more than half of the states. Things came to a head at the Bangalore session of the AICC in July 1969. Indira Gandhi sent a note of “stray thoughts” to the Working Committee urging more aggressive stance toward economic policy- nationalization of major commercial banks, effective implementation of land reforms, ceiling on urban incomes and property, and curbs on industrial monopolies.³ The Syndicate was divided in its reaction. Although leaders like Morarji Desai were vocal against the proposal. The Syndicate struck back when the time came to select the Congress candidate for upcoming Presidential election. Indira Gandhi suggested the name of V.V. Giri, the Vice President and acting President due to death of President Zakir Hussain earlier in 1969, or Jagjivan Ram, the most prominent scheduled caste leader of her cabinet, held the office of Minister for Food and

¹ The young socialist leader within the Congress having support of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi supported the socialist measures and power by Indira Gandhi. These leaders were popularly known as Young Turks.

² The old leader and state bosses of Congress who wanted to establish a sharp line of difference between Congress and Congress Government reasserted it and, engineering the two successions to bring Lal Bahadur Shasrti then Indira Gandhi to power, sought to dominate the office of the PMO. These leaders were popularly known as Syndicate.

³ Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. The Congress in India- Crisis and Split. *Asian Survey*, vol-10, no-3, P. 257.

Agriculture. But the Congress Parliamentary board overruled her suggestion and nominated Neelem Sanjiva Reddy whose nomination was secure with the support of Nijalingappa, Kamraj, S.K. Patil and Morarji Desai. With Reddy's nomination by Congress, V.V.Giri contested as an independent candidate.

Nijalingappa, the Congress president, issued whip instructing to all Congress members of Parliament and the state legislative assemblies to vote for Sanjiva Reddy, the official candidate of the Party. The Prime Minister, the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party, refused to issue a whip for Reddy and Jagjivan Ram and Fakhudin Ali Ahmed, acting on behalf of Indira Gandhi, declared that all legislators must be allowed for "free vote" according to their conscience. This was trial of strength between the syndicate and Indira Gandhi. Support for Giri was now in the open. Election was held on 16 August but in the first round neither Reddy nor Giri achieved the required number of votes. Giri won in the second preferences of votes. He was supported primarily by Non-Congress States such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Punjab and West Bengal. This was the triumph of Indira Gandhi's strength in the Congress.

Giri's election was greeted with tremendous popular enthusiasm. In the wake of Reddy defeat in the election, the Syndicate was in political disarray. In heated exchange with Nijalingappa, Indira Gandhi launched a signature campaign among the member of A.I.C.C. to have a new Congress President elected by the end of the year. More than four hundred of the seven hundred odd elected members of A.I.C.C. signed the requisition. On October, Nijalingappa announced his decision to drop Fakhudin Ali Ahmed and C. Subramaniam, two supporter of Indira Gandhi, from the Working Committee. In response to this action, Indira Gandhi and her supporter boycotted the meeting of Working Committee and met for a parallel meeting with party member and follower at her residence. Nijalingappa, pressed by Kamraj and Desai, accused the Prime Minister intrigue, indiscipline, and corruption and asked Indira Gandhi to write a "show cause" notice to explain that why disciplinary action should not be taken against her. Indira Gandhi, in response, requested the resignation of the Railway Minister, Ram Subhag Singh, a Syndicate supporter. On 12 November, the Working Committee expelled Indira Gandhi from Congress. The Congress split was institutionalized in December 1969, with two separate Congress Session. Syndicate's organization was called Congress (O) and Indira supported party was named as

Congress(R). This division of the Congress changed the nature of Indian Politics, including Bihar. The split was subsequently justified solely as an ideological conflict between those with a vested interest in the status quo and those committed to social change.⁴

There was clearly visible reflection of high command politics in the Congress on Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee. The BPCC was also divided along the line of High Command division. Three important faction leaders K. B. Sahay, S. N. Sinha and M. P. Sinha supported the Congress (Organization), while other leaders like Daroga Prasad Rai aligned themselves with Ruling Congress of the Prime Minister. The faction within the BPCC which was rampant after death of S. K. Sinha that polarized along Congress (O) and Congress (R). The party unit came direct under control of high command and lost its autonomy which was maintained before 1967.

Congress Party as an Opposition in the United Front Government: 1967-1971

After the third consecutive victory of the Congress in 1962, the opposition parties in Bihar became more restive and militant than ever before; dharnas, gheraos, processions, fasts and bundhs multiplied. SSP, PSP, CPI and others took a lead in forming a united front against the Congress. The SSP did not had many ideological differences with Congress, except on industrial policy, but it believed that Congress must be removed from power at all costs because Congress is the main obstacle in the implementing the socialist policies. For the SSP, Right consolidation or Left unity was irrelevant to Indian politics, what mattered most was the removal of Congress from power.⁵ The other famous leader Jayaprakash Narayan, who had disillusioned with the party politics due to rampant corruption, defection and electoral malpractices, joined Survodaya movement, expressed his concern over the deteriorating condition of the country. He had told students in Patna that it would be in the interest of the democracy if the Congress lost some states in the 1967 election.⁶

The 1967 election made significant change in Indian politics, including politics of Bihar. During 1967-71, Bihar experienced nine coalition ministries and three occasion of President Rule. Obscured by the political chaos of defection and

⁴ Francine R. Frankel 2005. *India's Political Economy 1947-2004*. OUP, New Delhi, 2005, P. 390.

⁵ Ghanshyam Shah. *Revolution, Reform, or Protest? A Study of Bihar Movement*, EPW, 1977.

⁶ Ibid.

counter defection, numbering in the hundreds, was the new bargaining power of the upper backwards in getting a larger share of ministerial posts.⁷

The fourth general election marked the end of the Congress rule in Bihar as it could capture only 128 out of 318 seats in state assembly elections in 1967. The percentage of valid votes polled to Congress fell to 33.1 per cent in 1967 from 41.4 per cent in 1962. Lohia's SSP secured 68 seats, followed by Jan Sangh (26), Jan Kranti Dal (26), CPI (24), PSP (18), Jharkhand (13), CPI (M) (4), Swatantrata (3), and others and independents (8). This election changed the one party dominant system or may say first hole in the Congress System⁸ in which dissident Congress and opposition essentially played the role of legislative pressure group, was replaced by highly fractionated multi-party system.

After 1967 elections, the Congress, despite its plurality in the Bihar Vidhan Sabha, failed to form a coalition government under its leadership for two reasons: (1) bitter intra-party conflicts; and (2) the operation at a high key of the opposition strategy of "non-Congressism".⁹ First time in its history, Congress set mood to play the role of opposition in Bihar legislative assembly. There was fight for party leadership in the post-1967 BPCC. The four groups within the party, under the leadership of factional leader- Binodanand Jha, K.B. Sahay, M.P. Sinha and S.N Sinha, emerged in two sub-coalitions on the eve of the contest for the Congress Legislative Party's leadership. The K.B Sahay group supported M.P. Sinha faction for the party leadership, while S.N Sinha group supported Binodanand Jha faction. M.P Sinha elected leader of the Congress and leader of opposition in the Congress Legislative Party by one vote (97 to 96) and proceeded to negotiate for a Congress led coalition-led government.

It is significant to note that Congress was a single largest party in 1967 election followed by SSP with 68, but failed to form a coalition government due to rampant intra-party faction, in which each faction worked against each. When the

⁷ Francine R. Frankel. 'Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar' in *Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A.Rao (eds.) Dominance and State Power in Modern India: The Decline of Social Order*. New Delhi, OUP, 1989, P-99.

⁸ Rajani Kothari coined the term and explained the pre-1967 Indian party system as "one-party dominant system" or "Congress System" in which Congress played a role of "party of consensus" and "party of pressure".

⁹ M. P. Singh, *Cohesion in a predominant Party: The Pradesh Congress and Party Politics in Bihar*. S. Chand & Co (Pvt.) Ltd, New Delhi, 1975, P-77.

Congress Legislative Party (CLP) moved ahead to form a coalition government, the Binodanand Jha faction publicly opposed this move and stated that party should avoid the impression that it was in a big hurry to come back to power so soon after popular verdict against its rule, and that the party should keep out of power for the time being for “self-purification” in order to refurbish its “lost image”.¹⁰ Mahendra Prashad Singh, in his book ‘*Cohesion in a Predominant Party: the Pradesh Congress and Party Politics in Bihar*’ termed this kind of faction a “negative factionalism”¹¹, i.e., the development of factional conflicts to such an extent that cooperation among the factions becomes exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. The main motive of the Jha faction was to force M.P Sinha to decline the invitation of the governor to form a coalition government.

On the other hand, major political parties, other than Congress, fought election on the principle of “anti-Congressism”¹² and “catch-all-opposition” against the ruling party. The opposition parties were publicly committed to a non-Congress coalition as well as determined to interpret the election verdict as a “people’s verdict” against Congress misrule in state. Hence the news of Congress reverse pouring into the capital from all parts of the states brought the leaders of the opposition parties, ranging from the extreme of Right- Left, secular communal, and national and regional dimensions, to a single platform to declare at a mammoth public rally on February 23 not only their opposition to a Congress led coalition government but also their arrangement to institute a commission of inquiry to investigate into the “misdeed of corrupt Congress ministries” after the formation of a non-Congress coalition government.¹³

The Non-Congressism attitude leaded parties were Jan Sangh, Jan Kranti Dal, SSP, PSP, CPI and others in which few parties aggressively opposed the Congress policy and politics in Bihar.

The pre-1967 period remained favorable circumstances for Jan Sangh due to two reasons. First was the Chinese attack on India in 1962 socked the people and

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Dr Rammanohar Lohia came with his thesis of anti-Congressism ,i.e., all opposition parties should work in united way so that Congress could be removed from power.

¹³ M. P.Singh. *Cohesion in a predominant Party: The Pradesh Congress and Party Politics in Bihar*. S. Chand & Co (Pvt.) Ltd, New Delhi, 1975, p-78.

developed anti-communist sentiment. Patriotism and its wave entered in the mind of the people that helped and favored the Jan Sangh to exploit the public emotion against Communist Party. They also projected Congress as a responsible body for diplomatic failure with China. Second was the 1965 India-Pakistan war that also helped Jan Sangh to polarize the masses on the basis of anti-Pakistani and anti-Muslim sentiment in the next election. Jan Sangh increased its seats from 3 in 1962 to 26 in 1967 and polled increase from 2.8 per cent to 10.4 per cent. The biggest jump in the number of seats and percentage of votes was made by Lohia's SSP. To profit from the prevailing discontent against the Congress, Rammanohar Lohia came out with his thesis of non-Congressism and tried to combine all the disparate forces and elements hostile to Congress. When Lohia formed Socialist Party by breaking away with Praja Socialist Party, very few important leaders supported him in Bihar. Only some backward caste leaders such as B.N. Mandal, Bhola Prasad Singh and Jagdeo Prasad joined him. Even though Karpoori Thakur promised him to join the party but did not join. It was much later that Karpoori along with Ramanand Tiwari and Kapildeo Singh went over to the SSP, accepted the Lohia's thesis of non-Congressism and caste. Karpoori gave slogan of reservation of 60 per cent of jobs to backward castes and removal of English language as a compulsory language in primary and secondary education.

Credit goes to Rammanohar Lohia for bringing lower caste into politics in a big way and giving them a clear direction.¹⁴ Lohia wanted to end the domination of landowning Bhumihars and other upper caste over lower castes. Due to lack of rapid socio-economic transformation by Congress government, Lohia became very successful in mobilizing the lower castes for their revolutionary step to counter the upper castes Hindu imperialism. Praja Socialist Party also gained its seats and percentage of votes and it had anti-Congress stand in pre- and post 1967 elections. Karpoori Thakur was a remarkable leader of PSP who mobilized people on the principle of anti-Brahmanism, anti-Upper caste domination and anti-English language sentiment in Bihar.

The difference among the Congress faction provided an opportune moment for the opposition groups to coalesce and provide an alternative non-Congress government in the time of political instability in Bihar. In consequence, emerged a

¹⁴Girish Misha and Braj Kumar Panday. *Sociology and Economics of Casteism in India: A Study of Bihar*. Pragati Publication, New Delhi, 1996. P-331.

mosaic of nine parties in the form of what they called the Samyukta Vidhayak Dal¹⁵ (SVD, the united legislators' Party) along with some independent M.L.A.s based on a 33- point common minimum programme. Mahamaya Prasad Sinha¹⁶, Chairman of Jan Kranti Dal and Karpoori Thakur of the SSP became the leader and deputy leader respectively. M.P Sinha was the first non-Congress Chief Minister in Bihar who was sworn in on 5th of March 1967 with a 21 men cabinet. When K.B Sahay faction joined M.P. Sinha group against Binodanand Jha faction, this became clear that defectors of B. N. Jha faction will get the post of Ministers in Mahamaya Prasad Sinha's ministries in the first week of September 1967.

No sooner the SVD Ministry was formed, and then its weaknesses began to appear on coalition surface. Ministry remained in office only for ten months. Mahamaya Prasad Sinha was put into distressed against the demand of his office choice of selection of the ministers on the basis of strength in the assembly. During his regime, he faced mainly two kinds of problems in maintaining SVD coalition. First, conflict arose due to the policy differences due to differences in the ideology of Left Party and Jan Sangh in the coalition. The differences among constituents of the SVD was due to the policy such as Land Reforms, Tenancy Reforms, Food Policy and the status of the Urdu language as a state's second official language. These two ideologically opposed parties Left and Right tried their best to pursue their fixed policy. SSP and Left parties, to woo the Muslim votes in the state, had promised to give Urdu language as a second official language after Hindi and this was not the part of election manifesto of the Jan Sangh during election campaign. When SVD moved to give status of Urdu language as a second official language, this move was diametrically opposed by Jan Sangh.

The conflict over land reforms and food policy stemmed from the CPI revenue minister's attempt to amend the Bihar Tenancy Act to give more legal protection to the 'bataidars' (Share croppers), and from the SSP Food and Supply Ministers' proposal for a compulsory food grains levy obliging the farmer to sell a certain quotas to their produce to the government, usually at a price lower than in the open market,

¹⁵ The SVD with a combined strength of 169 in a house of 318 consisted of the SSP, Jan Sangh, the CPI, the JKD, the PSP, the Jharkhand Party, the Swatantrata Party and the CPI (M). It was later joined by few independent and three Congress defectors.

¹⁶ A former president of the Bihar Pradesh Congress, sinha had defected from the party in December 1966 to lead rebel Congress men denied nominations, who formed the Jan Kranti Dal.

to help meet scarcities caused by recent famine and to control black-marketing in food grains. Both these proposals were likely to be unpopular among the farmers and were strongly opposed by the rightist parties in SVD, i.e., the Jan Sangh, the BKD, and the Swatantrata Party.¹⁷

The another major source of conflict within the SVD was that backward classes and castes were given only 20 per cent of the ministerial position and at the same time upper caste hold 67 per cent of the ministerial posts and position. This coalition ignored Muslims, Harijans and tribal.¹⁸ Within the backward class Yadava communities which were biggest in terms of numbers got only one cabinet minister ship. Prem Lata Rai was the sole representative of the Yadava community and due to this reason Ram Awadesh began a jihad against the Brahmin president of SSP, Ramanand Tiwari. R L Chadapuri, the president of the All-India Backward Classes Federation, who earlier convinced many leaders that OBCs must have their own political party, he himself was from Yadava community once said to Francine R. Frankel that:

At the time the top Congress leaders of Bihar were involved in corruption and they were charge-sheeted by the Aiyer Commission. They wanted the United Front Government should be toppled so they could be saved from conviction. So I joined hands with these Congress leaders. I told them it will be better if you make B.P. Mandal Chief Minister, and he would be prepared to topple the SVD government if he was to be Chief Minister himself. I did it because I wanted to have a backward class Chief Minister and the break the Forward Caste tradition.¹⁹

It is significant to note that Binodanand Jha did not support the Congress Legislative Party to make a coalition government due to rampant intra-party faction in the Congress. He had substantial influence over SVD government and it was his prompting that the T.L. Venkatarama Aiyer Commission of inquiry was constituted to look into the charge of nepotism, favoritism, corruption, abuse of power and other malpractices against prominent Congress leaders, the opponent of B.N. Jha, which

¹⁷M. P. Singh. *Cohesion in a predominant Party: The Pradesh Congress and Party Politics in Bihar*. S. Chand & Co (Pvt.) Ltd, New Delhi, 1975, P- 79.

¹⁸ Girish Misha and Braj Kumar Panday. *Sociology and Economics of Casteism in India: A Study of Bihar*. Pragati Publication, New Delhi, 1996. P. 328.

¹⁹ Francine R. Frankel. 'Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar' in Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A.Rao (eds.) *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: The Decline of Social Order*. New Delhi, OUP, 1989.P. 90.

were K.B Sahay, Mahesh Prasad Sinha, Satyendra Prasad Sinha, Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav, Raghvendra Narayan Singh and Ambika Saran Singh. The Commission found correct the charges of favoritism and caste discrimination against K.B. Sahay, Mahesh Prasad Sinha, Satyendra Narayan Sinha, Raghvendra Narayan Singh and Ambika Saran Singh.

It is important to note that only three factional leader, namely, K.B. Sahay, Mahesh Prasad Sinha and Satyedra Prasad Sinha was investigated. No any leader of the Jha faction had been investigated. Why? Did Aiyer Commission focused on certain leader on the advice of certain Ministers or not, is a debatable issue. But it was clear that Krishna Kant Singh name came to mind of those who decided on the inquiry for the simple reason that he had fallen out with Mahesh Prasad Sinha over having a great say in the affairs of the Bhumihar faction after death of S.K Sinha and had defected to the Jha camp.²⁰

Congress-led Coalition Government: 1972-75

After a huge crisis and instability in the political domain of the state government, a fragile Congress-led coalition government came in power in the state. Congress, for the first time in its history, played very controversial role of opposition during SVD government in Bihar. As a role of opposition, Congress did not get credit from the people of Bihar as party who were more concerned about economic and social inequality, deprivation, destitution and social injustice to the people which were prevailed in Bihar Party's lust for power was very popular and within the party, personal ambition and caste alliance made the Party very fragile its internal unity. Defection was for rampant and it is well known that 128 MLAs elected in 1967 from Congress tickets remained only 40 for nomination in 1969. Renowned scholar Subhas C. Kashyap in his work '*The Politics of Defection*' has argued that the Congress must bear responsibility for not having given the coalition governments, any peace or chance to settle down to a constructive role²¹.

²⁰Girish Misha and Braj Kumar Panday. *Sociology and Economics of Casteism in India: A Study of Bihar*. Pragati Publication, New Delhi, 1996. P-336.

²¹ Quoted in Gopal Prasad Singh's *Power and Politics: Congress Rule in Bihar*, Academic Excellence: New Delhi, 2005, P-144

The high command of the Congress at New Delhi also cannot escape from the responsibility for the toppling game played by the Bihar Congress²². The personal ambition and the caste affinities made possible to change the SVD government into the B.P Mandal led Shoshit Dal Congress alliance into power.

The 1971 General Election

Despite Indra Gandhi's immense popularity and clear victory over syndicate in 1969, she was still politically vulnerable for party and did not command a majority in the parliament. She was dependent on issue-based support by the two communist parties, some socialist, the DMK, the Akali Dal and some independents. In spite of this, carrying on with her left-of-center stance, she undertook several radical steps. She had already taken steps for nationalization of the banks which was declared discriminatory and compensation paid was inadequate, the government used Presidential Ordinance to revitalize them. Several schemes were initiated for the nationalization of banks to grant loans to small-scale entrepreneurs, farmers, rickshaw pullers and taxi-drivers. She also abolished privy purses and other privileges of the Prince and issued a Presidential order derecognizing the princes and thus ending all their monetary and other privileges.

The governments abolished the managing agency and setup a Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) commission, under the MRTP act passed in 1969, to check the concentration of economy in few hands. Indira Gandhi asked chief minister to implement more rigorously the existing land reform laws. As a result to Indira's radical and egalitarian programme and slogans, her popularity grew further; and she replenished the Congress's social support base, especially among the rural and urban poor and to some extent among the middle classes.

The opposition parties such as Congress (O), the Jan Sangh , Swatantrata and SSP formed an opportunistic and unprincipled electoral alliance known as Grand Alliance , concentrated its fire on personal attacks on Indira Gandhi due to absence of any ideological coherence and common minimum programme. 'Indira Hatao' (Remove Indira) became its popular slogan of election campaign. On the other hand, Indira Gandhi did not attack personally and campaigned on national issues with

²² Ibid,

emphasis on social change, democracy, secularism and socialism. She used populist measures and appealed to landless laborers, poor, tribals, minorities and dalits to participate for social change and remove poverty. She countered the slogan of 'Indira Hatao' (Remove Indira) with more effective slogan 'Garibi Hatao' (Remove Poverty):

Kuch log kehtein hain, Indira hatao
Mein kehti hu, garibi hatao
(Some people say, get rid of Indira,
I say, get rid of poverty.)²³

Indira Gandhi's programmes were implied for social change. The result of February radical election turned out to be an overwhelming personal triumph for Indira Gandhi and a rude shock to opposition. The "astonishing wins" nationwide that gave the Congress (R) 350 seats in the 518 member of Lok Sabha- a clear two-third majority-at once decimate the right opposition, turned the table on CPI and neutralized the Marxist in their own regional stronghold²⁴.

Meanwhile, there were significant changes occurred at national and international politics. India engaged herself in the struggle for independence of Bangladesh, to give assistance to Bangladesh Mukti Wahini Sena, and succeeded in giving birth to new sovereign nation, so called, Bangladesh. Indian masses enjoyed it as a triumph for victory over its number one enemy, Pakistan, and Indira Gandhi was projected as 'Durga' (A Hindu woman deity). A very famous slogan was popularized at that time was 'India is Indira and Indira is India'. India's win over Pakistan gave a new energy to the people after India's diplomatic and military failures in 1962 with China and in 1965 with Pakistan which had been frustrated the nationalist mind.

In 1972, election was held for Bihar Legislative Assembly which favored the Congress. Bhartiya Jan Sangh, CPI, CPM, Congress (R) , Congress (O) ,SSP, Swantrata Party, BKD, RPI, PSP, Forward Bloc and Muslim League were the main party in fray. Indira Gandhi's Populism made return the Congress in dominant position at the center but it did not succeed in Bihar as party leaders hoped. Congress won total of 167 seats out of 301 and votes polled were 33.12 percent and secured 41.22 percent seats. While Congress (O) secured only 30 seats, voters polled 14.82 percent and got only 16.84 seats²⁵. Congress formed a coalition government consists

²³ Francine R. Frankel. *India's Political Economy 1947-2004*. OUP: New Delhi. 2005,pp.455

²⁴ Ibid,

²⁵ Election Commission Report , 1972

of Lok Tantrik Congress- a split away faction of the Congress one year (1972-73) and then ended with a single party Congress after 1 month 4 days in 1973 then leadership engaged with Abdul Ghafoor the first Muslim Chief Minister of Bihar.

Abdul Gafoor was a compromise candidate in the midst of the feuds among the caste leaders. As a Muslim he stood better chance in the calculation of Command or choice of Indira Gandhi. It was possible to keep the vote-bank of the Congress consisting both, the Hindu upper caste and the Muslims. His council of ministers was balanced in respect of Upper castes, backward classes, Harijans, and the Muslims²⁶. As it appeared from his legislative leadership that he was way ahead from his predecessors in respect of enacting The Bihar Land reform Bill, Fixation of Ceiling Area and Acquisition of surplus land (Amendment) Act 1972 and The Bihar Privileged Persons Homestead Tenancy (Amendment) Act, 1973²⁷. Gafoor was replaced by Jagannath Mishra, a younger brother of influential leader at centre, Sri Lalit Narayan Mishra, (Railway Minister and Union Minister of Foreign Trade) during Indira Gandhi's regime and he was once treasurer of AICC.

A week before the emergency was declared, the leadership of Congress was replaced by Jagannath Mishra who failed to reflect the social realities. He followed the strategy of his predecessor in strengthening the position of Forwards in his Ministry (to 40 percent) containing the Backwards (at 20 percent) and building up the representation of Muslims (13 percent) and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (27 percents)²⁸. Mishra was different from his predecessors in many ways. First he belonged to post-freedom struggle generation; he was man of standing both in public life and in their respective organizations. Mishra's activities were limited to Bihar University teacher's politics and he was hardly known over the state before he became chief minister and had not held any important organizational position. Second, he indulged himself in populism and made himself easily accessible to any ordinary party worker. Third, he was new face in Bihar politics and situation became favorable to his elder brother L.N Mishra's influence in Indira Gandhi's government. During his tenure of Chief Ministership, Jagannath Mishra had taken many populist majors in the state. He took over privately run high schools and colleges and opened

²⁶ Amiya K. Chaudhuri, *Contemporary Politics and Changing Economy of Bihar*, Shipra Publication: New Delhi, 2010, P. 193

²⁷ Ibid,

²⁸ Francine, R. Frankel's paper in Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A Rao (edited), op. cit., P. 104.

the avenues of quick promotions of college and university teachers to readership and professorship, declared Urdu as the second official language and introduced the scheme of old-age pension besides many other scheme. He did not care for the long-term financial and other effects of his decisions.²⁹

His basic failure was in the reflection of the socio-economic reality of the society in Bihar. Though he speeded up the implementation of measures of land reform but his attitude to the special commission for reservation of jobs for other backward classes' commission, so-called Mungerilal Commision, was not supportive. As Francine R. Frankel argued that "Mishra dismissed the reservation issue as a 'conflict between haves, between persons who are in government service, have landed property and are economically strong, and those who are equally strong. He ignored the final report, submitted in February 1976, by the (Mungeri Laal) Backward Classes Commission appointed by his own party five year earlier, and their recommendations to establish reservations for the other Backward Classes at 26 per cent of government posts. At the same time, he alarmed the rich landlords both among the Forward Castes and Upper Backwards through aggressive implementation of Indira Gandhi's 'twenty-point programme' for the reduction of rural poverty."³⁰

Congress totally ignored the aspiration of the other backward classes for their claim to have proportional representation in the governmental and educational institutions. Party remained in the hands of some dominant castes who never wanted to share power and position with other backward classes. The monitoring of the BPCC by the High Command reduced and later eliminated the intra-party structure which existed despite of rampant intra-party faction in the Congress. The power and position of any individual within the Party was not decided in the Party instead it was decided in Delhi. The command of the BPCC was directly controlled by the high command at center which reduced the autonomy of the provincial unit in the state. Earlier the structure of the Party was pyramidal in which all organs such as provincial unit, district unit, and Mandal unit were not independent but there was some kind of autonomy and intra-party democracy and place for dissident within the Congress which was disappeared in the Indira Gandhi's regime. The local units of the party

²⁹ Mishra, Girish. P. 353.

³⁰ Francine, R. Frankel's paper in Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A Rao(edited), op. cit., P. 105.

such as DCC or MCC (Mandal Congress Committee) stop functioning due to personalization and centralization of the party command which reduced the Congress electoral base at local level.

At the policy level, Congress did not success for radical change in the socio-economic conditions in the state while always claimed for the social change. The promises which had been given during general election did not meet, and, on the other hand corruption level in the government institution was all time high. The Opposition in the Bihar State Assembly blamed the Congress for giving impetus to the electoral corruption, using money and muscles in the election for their party gains, suppression of the free expression of the opposition.

On the economic front government failed to control price rise of the essential commodities. In the early 1973, the wholesale trade in the food grains was nationalized with the state taking over the entire purchase to follow later in the winter. The government had hoped to reduce prices and prevent hoarding by removing the middle men. Instead, food grains disappeared from the markets and their price rose steeply, especially as drought in the previous two years had already reduced production of the rice and coarse grains, and the wheat crop in the 1973 was smaller than expected.³¹ The people, especially in the urban area, and particularly during 1973 and 1974, began to express their discontent through strikes, student protests, demonstrations, anti-government rallies, gheraos and bandhs, which often turned violent. State leader fail to manage the crises politically which arose from huge dissatisfaction among the masses culminated in violent clash between protesters and police.

The Bihar movement was set back to the Congress as dissident forces became united under the popular leader Jayaprakash Narayan who called several conferences of the young student to give a blow to the Congress misrule in Bihar. He appealed to the university student in Patna that, leave study for a year and be united against the Congress to save the democracy in India. The violence increased in Bihar and it institutionalized in the late 1970s³², polarized along the line of caste that was mishandled by the state government. The rise of dominant backward classes such as

³¹ Bipin Chandra, *In the Name of Democracy: JP movement and the Emergency*, Penguin Books: New delhi, 2003.

³² Shrikant. *Bihar me Chunao: Jati Hinsaa Aur Booth Loot*, Wani prakashan: New Delhi. P. 66.

Yadava (which constitute 11 per cent population in the state), Kurmi, Koeri and other which were united against the upper caste and started violence against the Scheduled caste and Muslims. This rise of the backward classes in political domain in Bihar led to the declining in the base of the Congress.

JP Movement, Emergency and the Congress Party

The year 1974 was a year of unprecedented turmoil in the history of post-Independence India. The deepening economic crisis combined with weakening legitimacy of political institution produced a situation in which disturbances and even sporadic rioting in several parts of the country became not uncommon. This had its culmination in Gujarat and in Bihar. The Gujarat agitation of January-March 1974 ended in the dissolution of the state assembly. In Bihar, the agitation began in March 1974 with the slogan “Bihar bhi Gujarat banega” (Gujarat will be repeated in Bihar). Unlike the Gujarat agitation, Bihar movement had an organization, with central guiding authority of Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti, a planned programme, a cadre and the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan.

This movement was not a spontaneous but a sum total of discontent and dissatisfaction grew over a period of time. After the third consecutive victory of Congress in 1962, the Opposition parties became more restive and militant than before. The numbers of dharnas, gheraos, processions, fasts and bandhs grew rapidly. It grew due to failure of socio-economic change in the society. Different organization such as political parties, student organizations, government employees, trade unions and peasant groups organized demonstrations. It was 1967, when first time in history, Congress ousted from power by a united opposition through policy of non-Congressism. The lust of power and political arrogance made Congress to use any means to topple the opposition and make the government to capture power. Before general election of 1971, Congress took few radical steps to change the socio-economic system but result remained reversed. Price-rise of essential commodities such as vegetable oil, milk, rice and others was all time high. Discontent arose in common people and there was a need to start a protest that can change the system spontaneously, and Gujarat movement did that.

Student Movements

There is glorious history of student movement in Bihar in 20th century. This movement had been launched by two methods-constitutional and extra-constitutional, to resist the accesses by the government. There is no dearth of data showing students participation in Bihar right from the beginning of 20th century. A series of organization came into being, for example, Boys' Association, Darbhanga(1899), Saraswati Academy, Dharbhanga (1904), Biharee Students' Conference in Patna (1906). Similarly a series of youth organizations came into being to launch protest movement, for example, Patna Yuvak Sangh, Patna (1927). B.N College, Patna College, T.K Ghosh Academy, Patna Collegiate Schools and Rammohan Roy Seminary were the centers of students revolutions³³:is legacy. Students also played an important role in freedom struggle in the 1920s and 1930s, their areas of activity widened during Quit India Movement. This legacy of students' movement influenced the young students in Bihar to resist the policies which were aimed against the peoples' interest.

Students' protest in the post-independent Bihar can be traced back to 1956 when they clashed with the bus transport authority in which two students lost their life in police firing during the agitation. Again, between 1965 and 1967 frequent clash took place between students and government authorities. The main issues of demand were reduction of fees, organization of student union need to be re-established and judicial inquiry into police excesses. The student unrest became frequent in the post-1967 period. Their agitation often coincided with agitation of government employee, teachers, university staff, labor unions, political parties, and farmers and they supported each other's demands. For instance, in 1965 student riots in Patna occurred on the same day on which an anti-price rise demonstration was organized by political parties. The non-gazetted officers also organized a demonstration on the very day. All the groups supported the call for Patna Bandh. Again in October 1966, teachers, lawyers and other such groups participated in students' demonstration against police

³³Jayshree Datta, Students' Movement in Bihar: Pre Gandhian Period, *Journal of Social and Economic Studies*, A.N Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Patna, 1996.

firing³⁴. Soon, student protest and demonstration also started in other towns and city of Bihar.

Generally students' organizations were affiliated to particular political parties and they were backed by them. For instance, All India Students Federation (AISF) was affiliated and backed by CPI and others such as ABVP (Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad), SYS (Samajwadi Yuvanjana Sabha) were affiliated to and backed by Jan Sangh and SSP respectively. There are also non-parties students' organizations as well such as, Tarun Shanti Sena (TSS), played equally important role in Bihar movement. Students' protests were due to lack of basic amenities on campuses, reduction of fees, concession of cinema tickets, unavailability of books, transportation facilities etc. Though students also protested with political parties against price-rise of basic commodities and launched a state wide agitation.

It is important to note that students' organization invited Jayapraksh Narayan to launch a movement to save the democratic structure of the state. He himself was thinking of a students' movement³⁵ when he was invited to address a meeting of students at Muzaffarpur, organized by supporters of ABVP, JP appealed to the students to give up their studies for a year to 'save democracy'. Again in the symposium on 'Youth for Democracy' organized by Patna students' union in January, JP called upon the students to take few days leave from their studies and go to villages where people from lower strata of the society were not allowed to exercise their right of franchise. He said that students are the only people who could do this successfully. If they did not come forward, democracy was bound to fail in the country³⁶. On one of the occasion, at the conference, again organized by Patna University Students' Union and Tarun Shanti Sena, JP appealed to the students to take active role in national politics without being a prey to party politics.

Similarly other leaders such as K.B Sahay, Former Chief Minister and a Congress (O) leader, Karpoori Tahkur, another ex-Chief Minister of SSP and other leaders gave spirited call to youth and the students to overthrow the present corrupt government and play a role in the construction of the state. On February 17th and 18th

³⁴ Ghanshayam Shah, *Protest Movements in Two States: a Study of the Gujarat and Bihar movements*, AJanata Publication: new Delhi, 1977, P. 75

³⁵ Ibid.,P. 85

³⁶ Ibid.,

1974, the Patna University Student Union organized a Gujarat-type agitation that means overthrow the rule of Congress in the state. The pro-ABVP students emphasized the need for bhartiya education and demanded that India should maintain equal relationship or keep equal distance from USA and USSR. The AISF ,CPI backed students organization, walked out from the conference , thereafter, the conference formed the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti (BCSS) to launch an organized struggle for their demands, which included , combating the price-rise of basic commodities, reduction in tuition fees, availability of cheap books, students' participation in university management and Bhartiya education. On the other hand, the Leftist student formed Bihar Chhatra Navjawan Sangharsh Morcha (BCNSM), demanded to provide food grains and other essential commodities at subsidized rates, unemployment allowance to educated youths and establishment of Student Union in all the colleges. These two organizations played an important role for political unrest in Bihar.

Forewarned by the Gujarat agitation and the students protest in the state, Chief Minister Abdool Ghafoor took few measures to check corruption like some officers were dismissed or suspended and also took some steps to provide adequate supply of food grains to hostels and messes. He also arranged for books and declared to establish student union in all the colleges of the state. But students of the BCNSM and BCSS ignored these steps and launched a state wide protest and demonstrations.

The political demand of the movement was the resignation of the Gafoor Ministry and dissolution of the state assembly. Jayaprakash Narayan advised Gafoor to step down from the post due to monumental failure of the government to control the situation. Mahamaya Prasad Sinha, a former chief Minister and defector of Congress also demanded resignation of Gafoor and dissolution of the state assembly. BCSS threatened to launch a movement to paralyze the government if the Gafoor's Ministry did not submit its resignation by April 8th. College girls, Housewives, lawyers, doctors, teachers, artist and other sections of upper middle class joined agitation, organized processions, observed fast and gheraoed government offices and Congress leaders³⁷. This showed that political environment was against the Congress rule.

³⁷ Ibid.,P. 94

Abdul Gafoor was replaced by Jagannath Mishra, a Brahmin by caste and remained in office till emergency. Possibly Indira Gandhi trusted him more in her confrontation with Jayaprakash Narayan.

At this time in Bihar, BPCC was dominated by rural elites and still upper caste particularly Brahmin had strong hold in the organization. Factionalism was bitter in BPCC because it had social basis. Hence the Congress did not succeed in implementing the minimum economic programmes for the lower classes. Lack of true political structure within the Congress resulted in innumerable compromises which often prevented any positive action. Thus their political nature did not allow Congressmen to fight against the movement in Bihar³⁸.

Congress in Opposition in Janata Government: 1977-1979

After two years of confinement of democracy in the name of saving democracy, socialism and secularism from Fascism, Indira Gandhi announced on 18th January 1977 a new Lok Sabha election. The Prime Minister's statement had been accompanied by the release of political detainees, including leading members of opposition, relaxation of press censorship and lifting of restrictions on normal electoral activities by recognized political parties. The next day, 19th January, the leaders of four parties met at the residence of Moraraji Desai in New Delhi. These parties were Jan Sangh, The Bhartiya Lok Dal (a party principally of farmers, led by veteran Charan Singh), The Socialist Party and Morarji's own Congress (O). The following day Desai told the Press that they had decided to fight the election under a common symbol and common name. On 23rd, the Janata Party was formally launched at a press conference under the influence of Jayaprakash Narayan³⁹.

Ten days after the formation of Janata Party the assumption that Congress would win the upcoming election easily was put into question when a veteran leader Jagjivan Ram, The most senior member of the cabinet and acknowledged leader of the scheduled castes, resigned from the government and the Congress. The quitting of Congress by Jagjivan Ram, who had served at the center for almost thirty years, and was the only Congress leader apart from Indira Gandhi with broad national followers-

³⁸Radhakant Barik. *Politics Of the JP Movement*, Radiant Publishers: New Delhi, 1977, P. 70

³⁹ Ramchandran Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, Picador India, 2007, P. 522

among more than 80 million-strong Dalit community- dealt a devastating blow to prime minister. The loss was all the more damaging because of Ram's bitter denunciation of Indira Gandhi for her destruction of internal democracy inside the Congress, and preservation of democratic institution into "convenient instrument for asserting personal power"⁴⁰.

Bubu Jagjiwan Ram was a renowned personality in the Congress for his mass based support and the political acumen. He formed a new political party known as "Congress for Democracy" and collaborated with Janata Party regarding candidates in order to avoid the Congress gaining from a split opposition votes. His decision to form CFD spurred defection from the Congress in Bihar and UP and added to Janata Party's strength.

The united opposition has succeeded in making the Emergency a major issue of election campaign and all pledge to a common fight against Indira Gandhi and the Congress. Jayaprakash Narayan warned the audience that 'this is the last free election if the Congress is voted back to power; then nineteen months of tyranny shall become nineteen years of terror.' He said that people should vote without fear, and remember that 'if you vote for opposition you will vote for freedom. If you vote for Congress you will vote for dictatorship'⁴¹.

The post emergency election opened a new era of electoral politics in India in general and in Bihar in particular. The Congress suffered an unprecedented defeat in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections. The big parties which were in fray such as CPI, CPM, INC and Janata Party and state parties such as All India Forward Block, Muslim League and many smaller parties such as Jharkhand Party, Shoshit Samaj Dal, Socialist Unity Centre of India, Workers Party of India and many independent parties. At the broader level CPI and CPM were the parties who supported Congress's Emergency and state assembly election of Bihar in 1977 was a direct fight between Congress and Janata Party. Janata Party was overwhelmingly supported by the people of Bihar, 42.68% votes were polled with 214 seats and secured 44.23% seats while

⁴⁰ Francine R. Frankel. *India's Political Economy 1947-2004*. OUP: New Delhi, 2005, P. 569

⁴¹ Ramchandran Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, Picador India, 2007, P. 523.

Congress were polled only against 23.58 percent with 57 seats and secured 26.58% percent seats⁴².

The number of candidates in 1977 election also increased and made the election competitive. Out of 318 assembly members totaled 1338 candidates contested in 1957; 1529 in 1962; 2045 in 1969 mid-term poll; and 1982 in 1972. But the election scene of June 1977 in Bihar was unusual. This time a record number of 2994 candidates were in fray from different political parties and about 2350 were independent candidates in the electoral field of Bihar. This number was much larger than the total number of candidates in previous elections. The Janata Party set up candidates in 311 constituencies while Congress contested only for 284 seats leaving the rest for CPI in an adjustment. The Congress-CPI alliance, however, had not worked out very well. The CPI had set up a total of 75 candidates⁴³. CPM set up 17 candidates while the United Leftist Front comprising RSP, Splinter Group of the Socialist Unity Centre, the Forward Block and rebel Marxist Co-ordination Committee put up to 60 candidates. Bhartiya Samajwadi Dal consisting of BLD remnants put up to 80 candidates and the RSP (ML) 25.

One of the most new and significant incident occurred in the election was booth-capturing through violence in Bihar. Criminals were incorporated during the election to capture the votes and denying voting rights to the lower castes. This process developed in the post-1967 election and institutionalized in 1977. The system of criminalization of politics and capturing of booths can be divided into four parts :

(a) 1952-62 : during this period , Congress ruled through unparallel challenges , and Dalits were denied their right of franchise, Congress was overwhelmingly supported by the upper caste followed by willingly or unwillingly, by lower castes. But caste conflict was there in hidden form, (b) 1967-72: during this period Congress lost its hold in 1967 and caste conflict came in front. Caste violence, booth capturing, campaigning on the started, but it was in limited way, (c) 1977-1990, when caste conflict opened in public sphere and caste consciousness became very strong and consolidated for political and economic gain, (d) 1990-till now, in this period caste remained dominant for political gain but upper caste were involved either in the BJP

⁴² Election Commission Report, 1977, P. 12

⁴³ Shiv Lal , International Electoral Politics and Law, A recurring Encyclopedia , Archive, Institute for Electoral Studies, New Delhi, P. 3

or with the dominant backward class politics. Backward class politics were divided into two parts: first group was headed by Yadavs and their allied including Muslims, Dalits and others and the second group was headed by Koeri and Kurmi and their allied including upper caste, Dalits and Muslims. Upper caste were divided and submerged into the politics of dominant OBCs and BJP. Congress lost its bases whatever it had in its past.

It is significant to note that Congress's performance was all time low as it won 57 seats on 80 seats; its candidate deposits were forfeited. The Congress mass base was decimated and for the first time its workers were so demoralized that they did not work whole heartedly for their candidates. They could not prevent booth capturing and rigging which were practiced by newly-formed Janata party on large scale. Both the police force and bureaucracy openly sided with Janata Party candidates with the sole desire of getting the Congress defeated. Students and youth played a crucial role in booth-capturing and rigging. It seemed, election were one sided affair⁴⁴.

Janata Party formed government in Bihar who had more than two-third majority in the state assembly. Karpoori Thakur became the Chief Minister of the state and implemented Mungerilal Commission that provided 26 % reservation to the lower castes. According to this policy 12% reservation was provided to extreme backward caste, 18% to backward castes, 3% to upper caste poor and 3% to women in government jobs. The implementation of this policy made significant changes in socio-economic and political sphere of the state. Upper caste protested against this policy while lower caste supported it. This policy polarized the electoral along the line of caste. Ram Singh Ji, a Bhojpuri poet, once wrote against this reservation policy:

“Baal Na Katab,
Kapar Katab...”⁴⁵
(Will cut head, instead of Hair)

Karpoori Thakur was from Nai (Barber) community whose traditional work was to cut hair of all the castes and they traditionally served upper castes in their

⁴⁴ ‘One result was that in the 1977 election, “booth capturing” was practiced on a large scale. Congressmen were so alienated that they neither worked for their own party nor tried to stop Janata workers from impersonating votes or carrying out other fraudulent practices. Even the presiding officers “were annoyed with the Emergency and they invited the opposition to come and stamp papers. There was absolutely no contest. It was one-side” (Interview, U.N Sinha, Patna, 9 September 1982).

⁴⁵ Ashok Kumar Sinha, *Jannayak Karpoori Thakur*, Vishal Publication: New Delhi, 2006, P. 89

rituals. The above lines show that how upper castes were afraid of reservation and their strong opposition of the issues. This stand of the upper caste filled an antagonistic move in the mind of the lower castes them as well as against the Congress.

Janata Party implemented few following policies, which were demanded by people from years, for instance; (a) to implement reservation policy according to Mungerilal commission, (b) to provide free education to all up o 10th standard, (c) to implement Panchayati Raj Institution, (d) to prohibit liquor in the state, (e) to promote inert-caste marriage and (f) Human Guarantee scheme, food for work and many socio-economic policy.

Karpoori Thakur was popularly recognized as a leader of backward classes and castes. Both politically and socially, he symbolized a new phase in Bihar politics. His rise of political power posed an alternative to Congress and gave a momentum to political rise of the backward castes. He sought to consolidate his power base among the backward castes by promising them reservation in both government and educational institutions⁴⁶. Janata Party disintegrated in July 1979; Congress role of opposition came to end.

This period from 1967 to 1979 was as the most crucial time for the Congress Party as it experienced breakdown of the “Congress System” to sit in the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. The Party lost power in four states in 1967 elections and experienced fragmentation and strong dissident that led to the defection from the Congress. It faced organizational split twice, during this period, first in 1966 and second in 1978. The nature of the Congress changed from Nehruvian mode to Indira style of politics which was based on consensus to personalization of power respectively. During these twelve years, Congress led coalition government with the other smaller party for four years and remained in opposition for most of the time. The BPCCC lost its regional autonomy and was directed by high command from New Delhi. The intra-democracy and cohesiveness also drastically reduced in the Party and factionalism and defection was all time high that is why it created favorable condition for the Opposition to form a coalition government. The JP movement and consequently Emergency proved to be setback for the Congress for its debacle. The

⁴⁶ Subodh Kumar, *The Social, Political Process and the Economic Development of Bihar*, Manak Publication :New Delhi, 2009, p. 109

first time non-Congress government came at centre in 1979 in the leadership of Morarji Desai who set up the Second Backward Class Commission to recommend the reservation for the OBCs in government jobs and in academic institution in India. Bindeswari Prasad Mandal, former Chief Minister of Bihar and founder of Shosit Dal (Oppressed Party) in Bihar, headed the Second Backward Commission and submitted reports in 1980 just before the elections in 1980. The Janata Party lost its majority in the Parliament as it was in disarray due to its internal conflict in 1980 and elections were held in which Congress revived and came in power at centre as well as in the state.

Chapter: III

Revival of the Congress Party: 1980-1990

After Congress popularity declined in the second half of 1960s, Indira Gandhi recreated the Congress during the 1970s and 1980s as a much more populist and personalistic organ. The old Congress, with its modest organizational base, was destroyed in its transformation, creating a significant institutional vacuum in the Indian Polity¹. After a brief tenure of Janata Party in 1977-79, the Congress witnessed both a split and a revival. Within the Party, the most hard-line loyalist associated with the Emergency resigned, or were reprimanded or expelled. When Indira Gandhi failed to be supported for party president over Brahmanand Reddy, she called a National Conference of Congressmen on January 1, 1978 and with seventy MPs formed the Congress (Indira) or Congress (I) delivered the desired result in unanimously electing her president². 1980 general election brought Congress in power, the popular slogan in the north was:

“Na jaat par, na paat par,
Indira ki baat par,
Mohar lagaiye hath par”³

(Not on the basis of caste or region but on the call of Indira Ji put your stamp on the hand, the party symbol of Congress).

Congress party won 351 seats with 43 % of the popular votes compared to 352 seats and nearly 44 % of the votes in 1971. In Bihar, party won 30 seats out of 54 with 36 % of votes in 1980. The split between the Janata and the Lok Dal was directly responsible for the Congress party victory in the state; the two parties taken together polled 40% of the vote but between them won only 13 of 54 seats.⁴ A 10.61 % increase in the Congress (I) in 1980 state Assembly election from the 23.53 % polled in the 1977 enabled the party to win 167 seats in Bihar Vidhan Sabha. The increase in the Congress (I) vote from the 23.53 % in 1977 to 34.14 % in 1980 could not enable it

¹ Atul Kohli. *The Success of India's Democracy*. Cambridge University Press: New Delhi, 2001, pp-8

² Francine R. Frankel, *India's Political Economy*. OUP: New Delhi.,2005, p. 656

³ Ibid.

⁴ Frankel R. Francine has used the term Dominant Caste in her article 'Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar: Breakdown in Brahminical order' I Francine R. Frankel and M S A Rao (eds): *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: The Decline of social order*. OUP, New Delhi, 1989.p. 105.

to gain the small majority it had in the 324 member house. Actually the Congress (I) had to thank the division of the opposition vote for emerging as the winner in the 1980 polls⁵.

Table 3.1

Performance of the Political Parties in 1980 state assembly election in Bihar.

Party	Seats	Party	Seats
Congress (I)	165	Countermanded	3
CPI	23	Congress (U)	14
BJP	21	CPI (M)	6
JC	42	Marxist Coordination	1
JMM	13	Independents	21
J (JP)	13		
JR	1	Total	324. ⁶

Jagannath Mishra was unanimously elected the leader of the Congress Legislative Party (CLP) (I) and thus acquired the distinction of being the 19th Chief Minister of the state of Bihar. Mishra who was elected Chief Minister for the second time was the youngest and most dynamic chief minister of the state⁷. The victory of the Congress party was due to the split of opposition (Janata Party) into four political forces, viz, Lok Dal, BJP, Janata Party and the Congress (I). Even with such fragmentation of the Janata Party, the Congress could win with a small margin of only 6 more than the base majority. The election results showed that the Congress had lost its social block⁸. Continuing with the traditional recruitment in the Ministry, Jagannath Mishra's government was dominated by upper castes while circumstances required democratization of the party with the incorporation of backward classes. His ministry had 39 members where upper castes were 18 and backwards were 11⁹. Factionalism remained the focal point in the Congress and this deep factionalism

⁵Shiv Lal. *International Electoral Politics and Law: A Recurring Encyclopaedia*. 1984

⁶ Election Commission Reports. 1980.

⁷ Gopal Prasad Singh. *Power and Politics: Congress Rule in Bihar*. Academic Excellence: New Delhi, 2005, p. 153.

⁸ R.K. Barik. *Land and Caste Politics in Bihar*. Shipra Publication: New Delhi, 1996, p. 216

⁹ Ibid.

replaced Mishra with Chandrasekhar Singh in 1983, a leader of Rajput faction with the Congress. Singh was bought back to appease the Rajputs who were alienated from the Congress during Janata phase of politics¹⁰. Brahmin faction within the Congress was also divided into two groups one headed by Jagannath Mishra and other by Nagendra Jha and Radhanandan Jha, both were Maithli Brahmins. Later, Congress brought back Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav into the party fold hoping that the Yadav might come back to the party fold. They could not realize that the alienation of the backwards which started with 1967 election which got completed in 1977¹¹. If the backwards split into various political groups that led to the victory of the Congress, they did not come back to the Congress fold at all. Jagannath Mishra became the Chief Minister of Bihar after 1980 elections and he was replaced by Chandra Shekhar Singh, a Rajput leader in BPCC. The governability of the state engulfed into crisis when Mishra's government legislated Bihar Press Bill to control the media due to unwanted comments from that side which became the subject of irritation.

A very infamous bill was passed by Bihar Legislative Assembly- Bihar Press Bill, which was passed on July 31, 1982. There was strong opposition to this bill, which was begun by journalist and supported by almost all opposition parties, trade unions, organizations of teachers, lawyers, students, youth and middle class employees¹². According to this Bill, "Scurrilous writing" became an offence, both cognizable and non-bailable in Bihar. The Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure (Bihar Amendment) Bill 1982 by which the section of 292 of the IPC has been amended and power had given to any magistrate, executive (which include police) or judicial can initiate action and put the accused person in jail for a duration of as long as 180 days before a charge sheet is even framed against him.

The amendment was, therefore, not only undemocratic, but led to police raj over the press¹³. There were strong protest, dharnas, processions, strike and meeting held by both journalist and non-journalist people in the state in different towns. On October 21, the first ever march to Parliament was staged by journalists against the Bihar Press Bill.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 217

¹² Chittaranjan Alva. What the Bihar Press Bill Means. *Social Scientist*, Vol. 10, No. 12, Pp. 52-56.

¹³ Ibid.

The Congress (I) members were not happy with the Bill. Even 45 members of the Congress Legislative Party in Bihar opposed the stand and wanted to consult the High Command before passing it. The manner in which the Bill was passed and defended by Central Congress (I) leadership, the High Command (Indira Gandhi) had information about the bill prior to approval in Bihar Legislative Assembly. This may well have been the reason why the Bihar Chief Minister, Jagannath Mishra, was emboldened to have the Bill introduced, rushed through three readings and adopted in the course of just five minutes in the Bihar Assembly on July 31, 1982¹⁴.

Chittranjan Alva, a journalist, argued that 'there can be no doubt that the constant exposure in the press of the misdeeds of corrupt politicians, officials and businessmen in Bihar have earned the ire of the Congress (I) leadership in the state and at the centre. Because they have perceived that such exposure form an important adjunct to the democratic movement, which in turn endangers their perpetuation in power, they have enacted such a draconian piece of legislation as the Bihar Press Bill and continued to defend it indefatigably¹⁵. Irony was that when protest was launched by journalist, the newspaper offices, journalist's houses were attacked and ransacked by Congress (I) supporters in Bihar. The whole media, journalist and intelligentsia opposed this move of Congress (I), especially in Bihar.

To attract Rajputs voters, which have been alienated from the party since Janata rule, the high command changed the leadership of Bihar Congress party and Jagannath Mishra was replaced by Chandrasekhar Singh, a Rajput landlord of the Monghyr district. Singh's appointment was a part of a pattern of appeasing and bringing Rajputs closer to the Congress (I). In M.P, Arjun Singh was made Chief Minister while in Uttar Pradesh V.P Singh ascended the Chief Ministerial chair. The assumption perhaps was that Brahmins, Harijans and Muslims were already with the Congress (I), if Rajputs or Thakurs were brought in the party, they would be in better position to face the muscle power of rising backward caste in general and Yadav in particular¹⁶. This policy created suspicion in the mind of traditional supporters such as Brahmins in the state.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 54

¹⁶ Girish Mishra and Braj Kumar Panday. *Sociology and Economics of Casteism in India: A Study of Bihar*. Pragati Publication, New Delhi, 1996, p. 366.

Although Mishra, was replaced by Chandra Shekhar Singh, (Rajputs) but he was not capable of managing the problem raised from different segments of the society particularly the problem of Scheduled Castes who have been engulfed in the caste war with upper castes private militia. As Girish Mishra observes:

‘True to his social origins, Chandra Shekhar Singh was conservative and deprived of any concern for the poor. He was in the heart of his hearts against completing the unfinished task of land reforms. When Prof. C. H. Hanumanta Rao, then a member of Planning Commission, visited a number of blocks of the state and brought the problems of sharecroppers and agricultural labourers before him, he cautioned Prof. Rao, not to raise this issue because it have destabilized the implications for politics. During his regime, agrarian violence spread in many areas and its intensity increased’.¹⁷ The politics of the state was in vulnerable position due to agrarian and sharecropping resulted by land reforms that could not be solved by Singh.

The 1984 Election: Assassination and ‘Sympathy Wave’.

The 1984 election was slightly different from earlier elections in India. Indira Gandhi was assassinated on 21st October by her own two Sikh security guard in response to the ‘Operation Blue Star’ in which Sikh community’s sentiment was hurt by the operation. The Congress Parliamentary Board immediately nominated her forty-year-old son, Rajiv Gandhi, as a Prime Minister. Political situation of the north-east, Kashmir and Punjab became very critical, culminated into the serious question of the unity and integrity of the Indian state. The attack on Indira Gandhi was perceived as an attack on the integrity of Indian Territory. People, therefore, had great sympathy for new Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. As a result, when national elections were held in December 1984, it was overshadowed by the assassination and the riots and killing of the Sikh which followed in many towns in North India.¹⁸

This time election results for the Congress were unprecedented in terms of seats and votes. Party obtained 404 seats out of 545 in general election in 1984 which is 49.10 per cent of the votes and 48 seats out of 54 seats in Bihar, its biggest victory

¹⁷ Ibid.,

¹⁸ Sudha Pai. *The Congress Party and Six National elections: 1964-1984* in Aditya Mukharji (eds.): *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress*, Academic foundation: New Delhi, p. 88.

ever in the electoral history of the state. Karpoori Thakur, the Opposition leader and renowned for his mass support, former Chief Minister of the state, was defeated by the Congress (I) candidate, Ram Deo Rai, a Yadav, and an affluent landowner, from Samstipur- thought to be a safe seat for Thakur in 1984 election. There was overwhelming support for Congress (I) and this support was in favour of unity and integrity of India rather than the Congress. Congress Party not only improved its position in Bihar, but in the whole Hindi heart land states gaining 210 seats against 143 seats in 1980.

The 1984 election has been described as an authentic wave election 'built upon' sympathy for Indira Gandhi or rather, in respect for her martyrdom and for the bereaved son.¹⁹ At least, for the time being, the people of Bihar like those of the other states sank their social and economic differences and forgot about their conflict and gave overwhelming support to the Congress (I), the only Party capable of safeguarding the unity and integrity of the country.²⁰ Paul R. Brass described 1984 election as a 'lamppost election' in which voters voted for the local Congress candidate irrespective of his social background and abilities.²¹ Therefore, this election was different from earlier elections and support for Congress candidate in a way was support for national unity and integrity rather than merely for Congress.

Table3.2

PERFORMANCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN 1985 BIHAR ASSEMBLY ELECTION

PARTY	CONTESTED	WON	VOTES POLLED (in %)
BJP	234	16	7.54
CPI	167	12	8.86
CPM	44	1	1.61
ICS	59	1	0.66
INC	323	196	39.30
JNP	229	13	7.21
LKD	261	46	14.69
JMM	57	9	1.82
SUC	1	1	0.07
INDEPENDENT	2804	29	17.88
TOTAL	4179	324	99.64

SOURCE: www.eci.nic.in

¹⁹ Ibid.,

²⁰ Girish Misha and Braj Kumar Panday. *Sociology and Economics of Casteism in India: A Study of Bihar*. Pragati Publication, New Delhi, 1996 ,p. 339.

²¹ Paul R.Brass.1986. "The 1984 Parliamentary Election in U.P", *Asian Survey*, 26 (6), p. 653.

The above table on the Bihar Assembly elections which took place in March 1985 shows a different picture from the Lok Sabha elections which was held in December 1984. The Congress (I)'s percentage share in terms of both seats and votes as compared to Parliamentary election slumped. As shown in the above table, Congress (I) secured 196 seats out of 324, i.e., 60 per cent seats and 39.3 per cent in terms of votes. Till now, the Opposition in Bihar was not only disunited but also in complete disarray. The 'sympathy wave' was not over. The slump in the Congress (I) votes by 12.5 per cent underlined the fact that the earlier shift of the backward caste support was temporary to the Congress (I).

The leadership of Congress Legislative Party (CLP) was changed from Chandra Sekhar Singh (Rajput) to Bindeswary Dubey (Brahmin, from Bhojपुरi speaking areas and a trade union leader) from the Congress (I) high command. His ministry was again dominated by the upper castes. Out of the 12 cabinet rank ministers in Dubey's Ministry as many as 5 ministers was from upper castes and only 4 from backward castes. During Dubey's regime, Congress (I) suffered from severe faction within the Brahmin group as he never had good relations with Jaganaath Mishra. The one Brahmin faction headed by Radha Nandan Jha and Nagendra Jha, supported Dubey's leadership in the CLP, both were Mathili Brahmin. Both factions acted against each other to achieve the personal ambition through the Party.

Bindeswari Dubey's leadership has been replaced by Bhagawat Jha Azad. During his regime, agrarian violence, kidnapping, dacoities and murder grew very high. He failed to bring peace and to maintain law and order in the state, particularly in the North Bihar. The killing of 50 people in village of Dalel Chak and Baghura in the district of Aurangabad which once was part of the Gaya district sent the shock wave through the state.²² Most of the persons killed in massacre were Rajputs, one of the landholding and politically dominant caste.

Bhagwat Jha Azad took over the leadership of the Congress CLP from Bindeswari Dubey followed by Satyendra Narayan Singh and then by Jagannath Mishra. In the five years rule of the Congress Party, the CLP leadership has been changed four times according to the pursuance to the high command, changed from

²²Girish Misha and Braj Kumar Panday. *Sociology and Economics of Casteism in India: A Study of Bihar*. Pragati Publication, New Delhi, 1996.

Brahmin to Rajput, again to Brahmin. The change of chief Ministership depended upon the closeness of particular faction with Congress high command at centre. Even the fact was that when one faction was supported by Central High command, the other faction opposed their leadership of Congress party. Much being made of the revolt by the Bihar dissidents against the Congress (I) high command, It is being said that it was a warning to Rajiv Gandhi that he cannot carry on the state's government as his personal fiefdom. The internal democracy within the Congress drastically reduced.

The important fact is that Congress government never allowed the lower castes into the ministries according to their population and aspiration. In the whole decades, Ministries were dominated by upper castes in the state while circumstances required democratization of the party. On the other hand, the Opposition was uniting against the autocracy of the upper caste dominance. Mandal Commission worked as a fuel to the fire in the process of uniting the other backward classes. The new lieutenant of the Karpoori Thakur such as Laloo Prasad Yadav, Ram Vilash Paswan and Nitish Kumar, the leader of the Yadav caste, Koeri and Kurmi caste and the leader of Dalits united against the Congress rule. Issues of reservation mobilized the upper caste in support of meritocracy on one hand while on the other hand Sarad Yadav, the influential socialist leader from backward caste, mobilized the lower caste in support of reservation. The Oppositions, this time, were uniting both at Centre as well as at the state level.²³

Table 3.3

CASTEWISE STRENGTH, IN PERCENTAGE, AT STATE LEVEL OF DIFFERENT POLITICAL PARTIES IN BIHAR 1980 TO 1985

CASTES	(1)Congress (I)			(2)Congress(U)			(3)Lok Dal			(4)Janata (J.P)			(5)B.J.P		
	Asse- Bly	Party %	House %	Asse- Bly	Party %	House %	Asse- Bly	Party %	House %	Asse- Bly	Party %	House %	Asse- Bly	Party %	House %
U.C	79	43.17	24.31	4	33.92	1.23	3	7.14	0.92	7	63.64	2.15	9	52.94	2.77
L.M.L	42	22.95	12.92	6	49.99	1.85	28	66.67	8.61	2	18.18	0.61	1	5.88	0.31
S.C.	28	15.30	8.61	1	8.33	0.31	7	16.67	2.15	2	18.18	0.61	1	5.88	0.31
S.T.	13	7.10	3.99	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	35.29	1.85
MUSLIMS	20	10.93	6.15	1	8.33	0.31	4	9.52	1.23	-	-	-	-	-	-
BENAGLIS	1	0.55	0.31	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
N.A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	183	99.99	56.31	12	99.99	3.69	42	99.99	12.92	11	99.99	3.38	17	99.99	5.23

²³ Ibid.pp-373.

CASTES	(6)C.P.I Asse- Party House Bly % %			(7)C.P.M Asse- Party House Bly % %			(8)J.M.M Asse- Party House Bly % %			(9)Independent & others Asse- Party House Bly % %			Total	%
	Bly	%	%	Bly	%	%	Bly	%	%	Bly	%	%		
U.C	5	22.73	1.54	4	66.67	1.23	-			11	52.38	3.38	122	37.54
L.M.L	8	36.36	2.46	-			4	36.36	1.23	3	14.28	0.92	94	28.92
S.C.	6	27.27	1.85	-			1	9.09	0.31	2	9.52	0.61	48	14.77
S.T.	1	4.54	0.31	-			6	54.54	1.85	2	9.52	0.61	28	8.61
MUSLIMS	1	4.54	0.31	1	16.67	0.31	-			2	9.52	0.61	29	8.92
BENAGLIS	1	4.54	0.31	1	16.67	0.31	-		0.31	1	4.76	0.31	4	1.23
N.A				-			-							
	22	99.99	6.77	6	99.99	1.85	11	99.99	3.38	23	99.99	6.46	325	9.99

Source: Roma Mitra. Caste Polarization and Politics. Syndicate Publication, Patna, 1992, pp-126.

Table 3.4

CASTEWISE STRENGTH, IN PERCENTAGE, AT STATE LEVEL OF DIFFERENT POLITICAL PARTIES IN BIHAR AFTER THE 1985 ELECTION

CASTES	(1)Congress (I) Asse- Party House Bly % %			(2)Janata Party Asse- Party House Bly % %			(3)Lok Dal Asse- Party House Bly % %			(4)B.J.P. Asse- Party House Bly % %			(5)C.P.I Asse- Party House Bly % %		
	Bly	%	%	Bly	%	%	Bly	%	%	Bly	%	%	Bly	%	%
U.C	91	46.43	28.00	11	84.61	3.38	11	23.91	3.38	6	37.5	1.81	7	58.33	21.5
L.M.L	25	12.75	7.69	1	7.69	0.31	23	50	7.70	2	12.5	0.61	2	16.67	0.61
S.C.	30	15.31	9.23				9	19.56	2.76	3	18.75	0.92	3	25.0	0.92
S.T.	16	8.61	4.92							4	25.0	1.23			
MUSLIMS	30	15.31	9.23	1	7.69	0.31	3	6.52	0.92						
BENAGLIS	4	2.04	1.23							1	6.25	0.30			
N.A															
TOTAL	196	100.0	60.30	13	100.0	4.00	46	100.0	14.13	16	100.0	4.87	12	100.0	3.68

CASTES	(6)C.P.M Asse- Party House Bly % %			(7)J.M.M Asse- Party House Bly % %			(8)Independent & others Asse- Party House Bly % %			Total	%
	Bly	%	%	Bly	%	%	Bly	%	%		
U.C							14	48.27	4.31	140	43.07
L.M.L				1	12.5	0.31	8	27.24	2.46	62	19.07
S.C.							2	6.89	0.61	47	14.46
S.T.				7	87.5	2.15	4	13.79	1.23	31	9.54
MUSLIMS							1	3.45	0.31	35	10.77
BENAGLIS	1	100.00	0.31							6	1.81
N.A											
TOTAL	1	100	0.31	8	100	2.46	29	100	8.92	325	100

Source: Roma Mitra. Caste Polarization and Politics. Syndicate Publication, Patna, 1992, pp-127.

The above two table demonstrates the caste composition in the different political parties from 1980 to 1990. These data show the upper caste dominance in the Congress party in Bihar legislative assembly.

The political circumstances became very different from earlier time due to increasing level of crime, loot, murder, kidnapping, violence and conflicts. Booth capturing increased rapidly. As Sankarsan Thakur observes that:

Crime was rampant- There were 2,100 people murdered in the first year of Jagannath Mishra's rule. Every three hours someone was killed. Every twelfth person in the state owned an unlicensed firearm. Hundreds of clandestine gun factories had sprung up in the rural districts around Patna, Nalanda, Gaya, Jehanabad, Begusarai, Bhojpur. They did good business. Violence became a cult. Politician used hired criminals, landlords wanted to arm their militia, the Naxalite weapons for their land wars.²⁴

In October 1989, a communal violence occurred in Bhagalpur and Sitamarhi district in which more than thousands of innocent people were killed. Trouble began over a provocative procession of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and BJP zealots carrying bricks whose very proposition would shook the foundations of the Indian nation two years later: the Ram temple on the site of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.²⁵ Bhagalpur riots were the worst example of religious frenzy and communal madness in Bihar. Mob violence engulfed more than 250 hamlets and village around Bhagalpur and mostly targets were poor Muslims weavers known from generations for their fine handlooms and silk fabrics. The height of brutality was that the people of Logain village, in the south of the Bhagalpur were massacred and dead were buried in the fields and mustard saplings were planted on the clandestine graveyard. The massacre of Logain was discovered a month later when the stench of rotting flesh drew droves of dogs and kites and eagles.²⁶ The famous slogan during this communal violence was "Jai Ma Kali, Tartapur (a Muslim locality) Khali" (long live Mother Kali, Tartapur will be empty) and "Apman ka badala lenge Babar ki santan se" (we will avenge the

²⁴ Sankarsan Thakur. *Subaltern Saheb: Bihar and the Making of Laloo Yadav*. Picador, India. 2006, P. 84.

²⁵ Ibid.,

²⁶ Ibid., p. 85.

insult inflicted by Babar from his children). The government did not provide security to the victims of the violence.

The government, then headed by Satyendra Narayan Singh, a Rajput leader, was worried about losing Hindu vote in the upcoming election. The section of the administrator and police were confused due to lack of political directives from Patna on how to handle the situation. The traditional key supporters of Congress party, Muslim detached themselves and supported Janata Dal, the number one Opposition Party of the Congress. The CPI and CPM, who were in support of the Congress, supported Janata Dal. Every move was against the Congress and in support of the JD.

In the Lok Sabha elections in December 1989, the Congress (I) secured only 4 seats out of 54 seats and polled just 28.1 per cent votes. The new amalgamated Janata Dal secured 32 seats and 23.7 per cent votes. What happened to the Congress in only five years of rule that party lost 40 seats as compared to 1984, and ousted from power in Bihar and never come back again? Even the party strength decreased gradually and electoral base and support declined completely.

Table 3.5

Performance of Political Parties in 1990 Bihar Assembly Elections.

Political Party	Seat Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled (in %)
BJP	237	39	11.61
CPI	109	23	6.56
CPM	31	6	1.33
ICS	54	0	0.30
INC	323	71	24.78
JD	276	122	25.61
JNP (JP)	158	3	1.54
LKD (B)	138	0	0.69
JMM	82	19	3.14
IPF	82	7	2.77
JKD	28	1	0.42
MCOR	11	2	0.22
SOP (L)	47	1	0.34
Independent	4320	30	18.42
Total	5896	324	97.76

- Few parties have been not counted due to having not seats in Assembly and their votes polled are very low.
- Source: www.eci.in

The above table shows the performance of different political parties in Bihar. The state assembly election which took place during the first quarter of 1990 found the Congress (I) percentage of votes going down 24.78 per cent and its seats came down to just 71 as against 196 in 1985. The uniting of the Opposition led to their victory in the state which was divided in early two Vidhan Sabha elections. The former Chief Minister who had mass electoral base from the backward class, Karpoori Thakur expired in 1988. The Opposition leaders were united under the leadership of Laloo Prasad Yadav who has unique personality in the Indian politics, especially in Bihar. He mobilized the OBCs on three issues: to curb the corruption and criminalization, to provide self-respect to the lower castes, and the breakdown of communal pace.

As happened earlier in the Congress, this time also its winning list candidates were from upper castes. It had 14 Brahmins, 13 Bhumihar, 12 Rajputs and 2 Kayasths, i.e., 39 out of 71 came from the upper castes. It had only 8 yadavs, 1 Koeri and 1 Bania, i.e., only 10 from backward castes, besides 7 Dalits, 5 Muslims and 8 tribals. As against Janata Dal's winning candidates who among them were 7 Brahmans, 5 Bhumihars, 17 Rajputs and 1 Kayasth, combining all 30 were from upper castes; and 36 Yadavs, 6 kurmis, 3 koeris, 5 Baniyas,, and over all 55 from backward castes. Besides, it had 11 Muslims, 23 Dalits and 11 tribals. Obviously Janata Dal had more representatives from backward castes and was more democratically sound party in tunes with the socio-economic realities of the state.

On the leadership issues, the Congress was not clear about the leadership due to monitoring of the central High Command, though elections were fought under the leadership of Jagannath Mishra because he only had capability to manage the present situation politically as well as economically. On the other side the Janata Dal had comprehensive leadership from all the caste, for example, Raghunath Jha (Brahmin), Sharad Yadav and Laloo Yadav from Yadav castes, Nitish Kumar from koeri caste and Ramvilash Paswan from Dalit. Janata Dal also had support from JMM leader Sibbu Soren, an influential leader of the tribal land of Bihar, popularly known as Guruji within the community. So, the leadership of the Janata Dal was also more democratic than the Congress Party.

This chapter has explained the revival of the Congress and its politics in Bihar. The Party faced crisis of governability in the state as crime rate, violence and

corruption were all time high and government was unable to manage it. The caste conflict turned into class conflict as the landlords formed private militia to suppress the voice of the lower castes, especially the Dalits. The 1984 election result, in which Congress victory was bigger than ever before, was the outcome of the “sympathy wave” aftermath the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The attack on the Prime Minister was perceived as an attack on unity and integrity of the nation and people response was similar despite of the internal division of castes and region. The support for the Congress in 1984 was the support for territorial unity and integrity of India. The Mandal Commission reports and anti-Mandal agitation changed the politics of Hindi heartland, especially in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The general election of 1989 changed the politics at centre when Congress lost its majority in the Lok Sabha and decided not to form government. When state assembly election was held in Bihar, Congress lost its electoral field to the Janata Dal, a newly formed party. Congress was in complete disarray due to crisis of unanimous leadership in the state and also was discouraged due to governance it had delivered in the last five years. The Muslims, a traditional supporter of the Congress moved away and cast the votes to the Janata Dal because largely due to impact of the Bhagalpur violence in which Congress government failed to provide security to them. In contrast to the earlier, Opposition was united under the banner of Janata Dal and was led by young leaders who raised the question of liberty and self-respect of lower castes. The candidacy in the electoral field was also more democratic and inclusive in the Opposition Party rather than in the Congress.

Chapter: IV

Rise of Backward Class Politics and the Decline of the Congress Party

The decade of 1990s is the decade of transformation in socio-economic and political sphere in Indian politics which witnessed governmental instability, rise of coalition politics, rise of BJP and decline of Congress, rise of regional parties and emergence of OBC politics, and subterranean politics of economic liberalization. India became perhaps “the only large democracy in the world today where the turnout of lower order of society is well above that of most privileged groups”. In 1984, participation in the rural areas overtook urban turnout for the first time. During 1980s and 1990s, Tribals and Dalits closed the gap between vote levels in reserved and general constituencies, while the odd ratio for voting of Hindu upper castes showed a relative decline. All of this changed the social composition of voters and those who took part in the political activities. The expanded participatory base of India’s politics reached downward to involve nearly all groups suffering from some or the other form of social deprivations and backwardness, that is, OBCs, Scheduled Castes, Tribals and minorities¹.

Social Demography of Bihar

The electoral behavior and political preference of any individual depends on the socio-economic context in which they live. Social Class, gender, ethnicity, caste, religion, region and other social identities are the factors that have been found to affect the electoral behavior of the voters in both old and new democracies². The socio-economic relationship in the society is also reflected in the political structure of the state at a given point of time and circumstances.

Structurally, the population of Bihar comprises of thousands of individual castes. Caste is the most durable mode of social identity and has become the basis of

¹ Frankel R. Francine. *India’s Political Economy, 1947-2004*, OUP: New Delhi, 2005, P- 626

² Sanjay Kumar, Md. Sanjeer Alam & Dhanjay Joshi. ‘Caste Dynamics and Political Process In Bihar’, *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*, Vol. XX, No-1 &2, January to June 2008 Pp. 2- 5.

socio-political organizations.³ The caste group in Indian society may be roughly categorized in terms of Varna System, the fourfold division of Hindu society into Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (merchants), and Shudra (workers)⁴. The first three Varnas are often known as the “twice-born” Varna, since by tradition they alone undergo for religious initiation ceremony of “rebirth” and in strict orthodoxy, only these “twice-born” are allowed to hear the sacred texts of the Vedas and wear sacred thread. Within Varna System, there are many endogamous groups, also known as castes, which are numerous and all are competing with each other for claiming their superiority in particular categories. Traditionally the “twice-born” castes had dominated the socio-economic and political domain in the state but the scenario has changed after independence through application of universal adult franchise and the value of “one-person-one-vote and one-value”.

The incorporation of parliamentary democracy with a universal adult franchise, at village as well as at state and national level, has meant that numbers have become a weapon of much potency in the political process at all echelons⁵. The rule of numbers (population) of the particular community has played an important role in capturing political power which could be transformed into socio-economic power in the society. For example, the Kayastha was once dominant caste in Bihar followed by Bhumihaar, Rajput and Brahmins. The upper Shudras i.e. Yadav, Koiris and Kurmi are now dominant Other Backward Castes (OBCs) in Bihar which have been capturing political power and have transformed their socio-economic condition through that political power since 1990.

Table 4.1

Major Caste Groups of Bihar

Category	Caste Group	Percentage of Total Population
“Twice-Born” castes	Brahmin	4.7
	Bhumihar	2.9
	Rajput	4.2
	Kayastha	1.2
	Bania	0.6
Upper Shudras	Yadav	11.0

³ Ibid.

⁴ Harry W. Blair, ‘Ethnicity and Democratic Politic in India: Caste as a Differential Mobilizer in Bihar’. *Comparative Politics*, Vol.5, No-1, 1972, p-110-112.

⁵ Ibid.

	Kurmi	3.6
	Koiri	4.1
Lower Shudras	Barhi	1.0
	Dhanuk	1.8
	Kahar	1.7
	Kandu	1.6
	Kumhar	1.3
	Lohar	1.3
	Mallah	1.5
	Nai	1.4
	Tatawa	1.6
	Teli	2.8
	Other Shudras (Less than 1% each)	16.0
Muslims		12.5
Scheduled Castes		14.1
Scheduled Tribes		9.1
<i>Total</i>		100.0

Note: The “twice-born” castes and upper shudras have been listed in the order of their generally accepted social precedence. There is no such consensus on lower shudras ranking; they are listed here in alphabetical order.

Source: Blair, W.Harry. Ethnicity and Democratic Politics in India: Caste as a Differential mobilise in Bihar, Comparative Politics, Vol. 5, 1972.

The above political demography suggests that the upper caste Hindus constitutes about 13.6 per cent, followed by 50.7 per cent OBCs, 12.5 per cent Muslims, 14.1 per cent SCs and 9.1 per cent STs in undivided Bihar. Though upper caste Hindus are numerically small as compared to OBCs, they are the ones who have dominated social, economic and political life till 1989. Traditionally, they constituted the most powerful section of the society, for they possessed large chunk of arable land, dominated bureaucracy, academia, big business and political power⁶.

Backward castes, known as OBCs, constitute the large chunk of the state accounted for about 51 per cent of the total population. Traditionally these castes were socially, economically and politically marginalised and were victims of graded inequality⁷. Among OBCs, Yadav was most numerous-11 per cent of the population, followed by Koiri 4.1 per cent and Kurmi 3.6 per cent. The other castes among OBCs are ranging from 2.8 per cent (Teli-Oil extractor) to less than 1.0 per cent.

⁶ Ibid.P- 107-111

⁷ B.R. Ambedkar, defined the Castes in terms of Graded inequality quoted in Cristophe Jafferlot's India's Silent Revolution: The rise of the Low castes in North Indian Politics, Permanent Black: New Delhi, 2003, P- 21.

The caste alignment in Bihar started much before independence as Bihari did not wait till independence to mobilise caste group for political purpose. They began to do so in 1920s and have continued ever since⁸. Of 23 scheduled castes in the census, Chamars constitute about 31.3 per cents, followed by Dusadhs 30 per cent, the second largest group of SCs and other significant groups are Mushahar, Pashi, Dhobi and Bhuia⁹. The SCs- the ex-untouchables, accounted for about 14.1% of the total population. In the social order, these communities are at the bottom of socio-economic hierarchy and thus are the most disadvantaged segment of the society.

The rise of participation in political institution by the socially deprived and backward classes and castes termed as the second democratic upsurge¹⁰ in Indian politics which democratized the Indian politics in general and of Bihar politics in particular. The impetus for politics transformation originated in the rapid realignment that began to take place in the late 1980s. The state was controlled by Congress until 1989, with its social base drawn from Brahmins, the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes, operating as a centrist party, Congress attracted the support of a wide range of groups. As elsewhere the center piece of its hegemony was a strategy that vertically aggregated the interest of different sections of the society¹¹. This strategy was challenged by new social forces in which Other Backward Castes, also called Other Backward Classes (OBCs), were most prominent, especially in Bihar.

The main social conflict in Bihar, apparently hidden since 1962 but open since 1977, has been between the upper caste, represented by Congress, and backward castes, backed by Socialist who had theme of non-Congressism in their mind. They mobilized under the giant leader Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia, Karpoori Thakur and under dynamic leadership of Sharad Yadav, George Fernandez, Laloo Prasad Yadav, Nitish Kumar and Ramvilas Paswan. These leaders were dedicated to reduce economic inequality of the backward castes and provide them social justice,

⁸Harry W.; Blair, 'Ethnicity and Democratic Politic in India: Caste as a Differential Mobilizer in Bihar'. *Comparative Politics*, Vol.5, No-1, 1972, P- 114

⁹ Kumar, Sanjay, Md. Sanjeer Alam& Dhanjay Joshi. ' Caste Dynamics and Political Process In Bihar', *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*, Vol. XX, No-1 &2, January to June 2008 p- 2 to 5.

¹⁰ Yogendra Yadav,. 'Understanding the Second Democratic Upsurge' in Francine R. Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargawa and Balbeer Arora(eds.),*Transforming India*, OUP: New Delhi, 2000, P- 120

¹¹ Zoya Hasan,. 'Representation and Redistribution: the New Lower Caste Politics of North India' in Francine R. Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargawa and Balbeer Arora(eds.)-*Transforming India*, OUP: New Delhi, 2000, P- 149.

and an environment free from fear of upper caste's psychological violence¹². The other backward castes were polarized in the state around reservation policy since 1967. The assertion of OBCs in the political dynamism had led to many socio-political caste war and formation of many senas pertaining to the particular caste.

The 1990s marked out complete breakdown of Congress system in the state on the one hand and witnessed major transformation in the social basis of the political power on the other hand¹³. The Congress was ousted from power by OBCs backed party Janata Dal and never came back to power. Congress secured only 71 seats and polled with 24.86 per cent which is slightly higher than 1977 while Janata Dal polled 29.84 per cent vote with 122 seats, CPI 23 seats with 19.86 per cent votes, CPM 6 seats with 14.71 per cent votes and BJP 39 seats with 16.35 per cent votes polled. The Congress did not return towards increasing polled percent or seats as it secured 24.86 per cent in 1990, 29 seats and 16.51 per cent votes polled in 1995, 23 seats and 11.06 per cent votes polled in 2000, 10 seats and 14.43 per cent votes polled in 2005, and 4 seats and 8.37 per cent votes polled in 2010.¹⁴

Studies of electoral performance of Congress states that party did not only lose its electoral base to the other parties but also struggled for its survival. It is important to note that not even a single leader was working in the state for the party on the ground level. Once Congress was an umbrella party consisting of all sections of the society and its catch-all characters changed to catch-none party. On the one hand, there was consolidation of other backward classes and on the other, upper caste fragmentation resulted in their dispersal to BJP and other parties.

It is generally argued that the political mobilization of backward castes and creation of forward-backward axis to contest for power was the result of marginalization of these castes within the Congress, which was dominated by upper caste and the reluctance of Congress leaders to share power with the numerically strong backward castes along with Dalits¹⁵. This attitude of the Congress created

¹² Psychological violence persisted in the mind of Dalits and lower castes for fear from exploitation and oppression.

¹³ Sanjay Kumar, Md. Sanjeer Alam & Dhanjay Joshi. 'Caste Dynamics and Political Process In Bihar', *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*, Vol. XX, No-1 &2, January to June 2008 p- 2 to 5.

¹⁴ Election Commission Report

¹⁵ Cristophe Jafferlot. 'Rise of Other Backward Classes in the Hindi Belt'. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1, 2000, p- 87-90.

distance from the large segment of the society when these sections once become politically aware. They started mobilizing along the lines of “caste association” which have been created and stated in the socio-economic and political life.

Political Recruitment and Mobilization of OBCs

The virtual monopoly of the upper caste over political resources has ended, and the operation of democratic politics has endowed the underprivileged lower castes with two attributes, of political influence, number and organization¹⁶. The political movement and mobilization has started with the formation of Triveni Sangh, an organization of (now dominant) Yadav, Koiri and Kurmi in the early thirties. This organization was formed to demand the share of lower caste in the political power structure, which the British government was slowly handing over to Indians. The Sangh also voiced its resentment against the discriminatory and unequal practices of the Hindu social system¹⁷. The upper caste also utilized the medium of caste organization to maintain status quo in the socio-economic and political structure. For example, Brahmin Sabha, Bhumihar-Brahmin Sabha, All India Kayastha Conference, the Rajput Sabha were the organizations which played an important role in maintaining the status quo in the society as well as in the state.

The real challenge to upper caste dominance came after independence in India, when parliamentary democracy offered universal adult franchise. The clientelistic politics of the Congress co-opted vote bank ‘owners’, who were often upper caste landlords, and untouchable leaders, whose rallying around the ruling party derived their group of some important spokesmen. There were fewer lower-caste leaders within the Congress, the lower caste being closer to the opposition parties, especially the Socialist, or the “independents”¹⁸. The Socialist leader Rammanohar Lohia, who regarded caste as a main obstacle towards egalitarian society, attempted to form an alliance of the non-elite groups mainly on the basis of affirmative action technique: they asked for caste-based quotas, especially in the administration¹⁹.

¹⁶Ramshray Roy . ‘ Caste and Political Recruitment in Bihar’ in Rajni Kothari (eds.) *Caste in Indian Politics*, Orient BlackSwan: New Delhi, 1970, P- 227

¹⁷ Roma Mitra. *Caste Polarization of Politics*. Syndicate Publication: Patna, 1992, P- 120.

¹⁸ Christofer Jafferlot,. ‘Rise of Other Backward Classes in the Hindi Belt’. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1, 2000, p- 87-90.

¹⁹ Ibid.

The first significant change occurred in 1960s when they entered the Bihar Legislative Assembly in massive numbers under the auspices of the Socialist parties. In 1967 assembly elections as many as 71 MLAs were from backward castes in the 324 member Bihar Assembly. The trend indicated the beginning of phase where monopoly of the upper castes was challenged by those traditional structures which were denied access to power in spite of their larger numerical strength. They had been subjected to a continuous socio-political exploitation²⁰. In the Jan Sangh, SSP and CPI, the backwards have secured a greater percentage of seats than upper castes. The aspirations of OBCs soared by different political parties adopting the caste mobilization and recruitment favored to backward castes. For example, when D.P. Rai of Congress became C.M of the state, he appointed a Backward Classes Commission to make recommendations for reservation in the educational institutions and government services for OBCs.

Until the emergence of Karpoori Thakur after 1977 elections and implementation of reservation policy, the backwards were not under single leadership. He, though belonging to a minority caste of Nai, assumed the leadership of the entire “backwards” of Bihar and turned other Koiri, Kurmoi and Yadav leaders who dominated backward politics²¹. He was dynamic leader who mobilized backward classes under his leadership. During Indira Gandhi’s regime, BPCC was dominated by Brahmins; while Indira Gandhi was herself a Brahmin and had close political relationship with Lalit Narayan Mishra (a Maithil Brahmin and elder brother of the youngest chief minister Jagannath Mishra). Emergency was a setback to Indian democracy as well as the organization of Congress. In 1977 election, Congress lost its traditional electoral base to Janata Party. All lower castes united under the leadership of Karpoori Thakur who implemented the Backward Classes Commission (Mungerilal Commission) recommendations culminated in strong polarization of castes in two parts. The entire rank and file of upper caste rallied behind Congress (I) on one hand and all lower castes supported the Janata Party led by Karpoori Thakur and his lieutenant on the other.

²⁰Jawaharlal Pandey, “Politics of United front in Bihar” (An unpublished Ph.D. Thesis) quoted in S.K Jain. 1989. Caste and Politics in Bihar, Commonwealth Publisher: New Delhi, P- 107.

²¹Hiranmay Dhar, Shaibal Gupta, Nandadulal Roy and Nirmal Sengupta. “Caste and Polity in Bihar” in G. Omvedt (eds.) ‘Land, Caste and Politics in Indian States’. 1982. A Project of Teaching Politics. Department of Political Science, Delhi University, New Delhi, P- 109

Meanwhile, one of the most important developments, started in the villages of Bihar, and this was caste conflict between upper castes and Dalits. Both castes, Dalit as well as upper caste with Muslims, were the traditional supporters of the Congress. From 1977 (Belchi, Patna) to 1988 (Malbaria, Palamu), there were eight caste massacre occurred during Congress rule. This ritualistic violence against the Dalit community was done by private militia formed by upper caste. This collective massacre known as Gohar²², Arvind N. Das calls it Harijan hunting,²³ challenged the state administration to maintain law and order and protect the victim of caste conflict.

If the statistics of conflicts in rural areas is examined, the incidence of rural violence shows some definite patterns. In the incidences of atrocities in Bajitpur, Khijuria, Bishrampur, Gopalpur, Baniapatti and Chandadano, the main issues were wage, sharecroppers' rights over their cultivated land, and possession of government distributed land. In Belchi, and to a certain extent, in Bishrampur, fight was against social oppression, including sexual exploitation. These factors were not obvious in other incidents though they were latently there in almost all cases. The caste component of attackers was varied. In Bajitpur, Parasbigaha and Pipra; Bhumihars were particularly aggressive landowning upper castes. In Bishampur, Beniapatti, Papri, Belchi, Gopalpur, Chaudadon and Pipra; Kurmis were a counter pose to Bhumihars among the backward castes. Whether Bhumihar or Yadav or Kurmi, they were landlords, who were determined to preserve their land²⁴. Sometimes Kurmi Zamindars were backed by upper caste landlords who fought jointly against the poor Dalits share-croppers and their victims were Mushhar, Chamars, Dusadh, Yadavs and even Brahmins (as in Belchi)²⁵.

The Dalit community, a traditional supporter of Congress, disillusioned with the rule of Congress government failed to protect their rights as well as their life, particularly in the North Bihar where caste conflict turned into class conflict. Both

²² Gohar is a very famous term in Bhojpuri and Magadha area of Bihar Gohar, a term representing a phenomenon so indigenous that it is difficult to find in another culture and language of its equivalent term. It can be loosely translated as attack but that is only small aspect of the actual process. It includes summoning friends, relation, armed retainer and dependent clients to help avenge real or perceived assaults on the social, economic or cultural position of the counterattacking party.

²³ Arvind N .Das. *The Republic Of Bihar*, Penguin Books: New Delhi,1992.

²⁴ Hiranmay Dhar, Shaibal Gupta, Nandadulal Roy and Nirmal Sengupta. "Caste and Polity in Bihar" in G. Omvedt (eds.) '*Land, Caste and Politics in Indian States*'. A Project of Teaching Politics. Department of Political Science, Delhi University, New Delhi, 1982. P- 110

²⁵ Ibid.

sides arranged their militia and became ready to fight for suppression on the one hand and assertion on the other. In order to do so, there were many private militias that had been organized especially based on caste such as Bhoomi Sena, Kuer Sena, Lorik Sena, Brahmarshi Sena, Diamond Sena, Sunlight Sena, Ranveer Sena, Ganga Sena, Kishan Sena and so on. The given table shows some details of the private militia groups and their confrontations in Bihar politics. Majority of this private militia was to maintain status quo in the social, economic and political structure of the state. State government did nothing in the situation to maintain law and order and provide security to the poor who were at the mercy of the upper caste militia. The upper castes dominance in the Party as well as the state structure may be one of the several causes of the massacre of the Dalits and was described by Arvind N Das as ‘Harijan hunting’²⁶ and he had given the term ‘Gohar’²⁷ for that genocide.

Table 4.2

PRIVATE ARMIES IN BIHAR

<i>Name</i>	<i>Caste affiliation</i>	<i>Operational districts</i>
Bhoomi Sena	Kurmi	Nalanda, Nawada, Patna and Jehanabad
Kuer Sena	Rajput	Bhojpur and Patna
Lorik Sena	Yadav	Patna and Jehanabad
Brahmarshi Sena	Bhumihar	Bhojpur, Jehanabad and Aurangabad
Shree Krishna Sena	Yadav	Nalanda, Jehanabad and Patna
Suvarna Liberation Front	Bhumihar	Jehanabad and Patna
Diamond Sena	Bhumihar	Jehanabad
Sunlight Sena	Rajput & Muslim(Pathan)	Palamau, Garhwa, Gaya and Aurangabad
Ranveer Sena	Bhumihar	Bhojpur, Jehanabad and Patna
Ganga Sena	Rajput	Bhojpur and Patna (Diara Area)
Kisan Sangh	Yadav	Jehanabad and Patna

²⁶ Arvind N. Das, *The Republic of Bihar*. Penguin Books: New Delhi, 1992.

²⁷ Gohar has already been defined in footnotes. see above pages.

Table 4.3

GUERRILLA GROUPS IN BIHAR

Name	Backed By	Operational Districts
1	2	3
Lal Dasta	MCC	Chatra, Palamau, Daltonganj, Garhwa, Aurangabad, Jehanabad, Gaya, Nawada, Dhanbad, Giridih, Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Begusarai, Khagaria, Munger, Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur, Bhojpur, Rohtas, Bhabhua, Buxar and Patna.
Red Squad	CPI (ML) Party Unity	Palamu, Daltonganj, Jehanabad, Giridh, Garhwa, Aurangabad, Gaya, Patna, Chatra, Hazaribagh, Koderma and Gumia.
Red Army	CPI(ML) Liberation	Siwan, Chhapra, Nalanda, Patna, Nawada, Jehanabad, Bhojpur, Aurangabad, Palamua, Chatra, Daltonganj, Garhwah, Sheikpura, Gaya and Begusarai

Table 4.4

KLLING FIELDS

Slaughter of Harijans in Bihar

Year	Place	District	Toll
1	2	3	4
1977	Belchi	Patna	14
1980	Parasbigha	Patna	14
1980	Parasb	Jehnabad	11
1984	Danwar-Behta	Bhojpur	22
1986	Gaini	Aurengabad	12
1986	Arwal	Jehnabad	24
1988	Nonhi-Nagwan	Jehnabad	18
1988	Kairiachattar	Jehnabad	7
1991	Malbaria	Palamau	13
1995			
April 4	Khopira	Bhojpur	3
July 25	Sarthua	Bhojpur	7
1996			
February 7	Chandi	Bhojpur	4
March 9	Patalpura	Bhojpur	3
April 12	Nonaur	Bhojpur	5
May 5	Narhi	Bhojpur	3
May 9	Narhi	Bhojpur	3
May 19	Narhi	Bhojpur	3
May 25	Morath	Bhojpur	3
July 11	Bathani Tola	Bhojpur	22
Nov 26	Purhara	Bhojpur	4
Dec 12	Khanet	Bhojpur	5
Dec 24	Ekbari	Bhojpur	6

1997 March 8	Haibaspur	Patna	10
Dec 1	Laxmanpur Bathe	Jehanabad	61
1999 Jan 25	Shankar Bigha	Jehanabad	22
Feb 11	Khejan Nrayanpur	Jehanabad	12
1987 May 29	Dalelchak-Baghaura	Aurangabad	42 Killed by MCC
1992 Feb 12	Bara	Gaya	39 Killed by MCC

Source: S.K.Ghosh., Bihar in Flames. New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing House, 2000, P- 60.

In the post-Janata periods, Janata Party fragmented into several parties and remained divided till (1989) ninth general elections. The Congress's win in the 1980s elections was due to the severe division in the Opposition.²⁸ The Mandal Commission issue polarized the masses between upper castes and lower castes. Karpoori Thakur played an important part in the assertion of the OBCs and his activities explained the rise of SSP at the expense of the Congress.²⁹ Bindeshwari Prasad Mandal, a former Chief Minister of Bihar and a Yadav who presided over the Second Backward Classes Commission in 1978, had been elected as MLA on a Congress ticket in 1957 and 1962. He defected from the Congress in 1965 and joined the SSP when it offered him better opportunities; indeed he obtained the ministerial portfolio of health in the SVD government in 1967 in spite of the fact that he had been elected in the Lok Sabha and not to the state assembly.³⁰ During Bihar movement all Oppositions were protesting united against the Congress rule and also united against the emergency. When election was fought, all parties contested against the Congress and won the elections at centre as well as in Bihar.

When V.P Singh government announced to implement the policy of reservation recommended by second Backward Classes Commission, also known as Mandal Commission, a huge anti-reservation protest came in front of India politics by students of different universities. The order to nullify the Mandal Commission's recommendation of reservation of seats in jobs and in educational institution, the

²⁸ Sudha Pai, The Congress and Six National elections: 1964-1984 in Aditya Mukharji (eds.): *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress*, Academic foundation: New Delhi, P- 88.

²⁹ Christophe Jafferlot . *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Low Castes in North Indian Politics*. Permanent Black: New Delhi, 2003, P- 266.

³⁰ Ibid.,

supporters of the anti-reservation argued to eliminate all kind of reservation which has been given to Scheduled castes by Indian constitution. This attitude of the upper castes and other, who were opposing the quota politics, brought the other backward classes and Scheduled castes closer. The quota politics issue was raised by socialists who had great belief that caste system is the root cause of all kinds of perpetual inequality. Among the great socialists in India, Rammanohar Lohia raised the issue of quota politics and political recruitment of castes to reduce the social, economic and political inequalities in the state. He proposed thesis of non-Congressism to bring the alternative politics in India and ousted the Congress from power. His thesis of non-Congressism had great impact on states politics, particularly in the north Hindi belt of India.

Lohia, Non-Congressism and Mobilization of OBCs around Reservation Politics

Rammanohar Lohia, the rising star of the Indian Socialist movement, a Bania (mercantilist) by caste was probably the first, to really incorporate caste in the movement's ideology³¹. He was also the first leader in India, who proposed thesis of non-Congressism due to some irritants with the Congress. His supreme objective was to destroy Congress rule³². Once he was active in politics socialist segment of the Congress but quit in 1948 and established Socialist Party of India. He became general secretary of the Praja Socialist Party, which resulted from the merger of the SP and KMPP of Acharya Kriplani. Disagreeing with most PSP leaders, who were inclined to collaborate with Congress due to the declaration of policy of socialist pattern of society, advocated by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1955, Lohia launched his own socialist party in 1956. A laborious reunification process led to the foundation of the Samyukta Socialist Party in 1964, before a new split took place in 1965, giving birth to a new PSP. Lohia remained at the helm of SSP till his death in 1967, by which it had become the largest socialist force in India.³³

Lohia made great effort to incorporate lower castes in politics in a big way and giving them clear direction to challenge the dominant position of upper castes. He gave the slogan of "Sansopa (SSP) Ne Bandhi Ganth, Pichhara Pave Sau Me Sath"

³¹ Ibid, P- 260

³² Girish Mishra and Braj K. Panday, *Rammanohar Lohia: The Man and his Ism*. Pragati Publication, New Delhi, 1996 ,P- 179.

³³ Paul Brass. R. *India since Independence*. Cambridge University Press: UK, 1992,P- 155

³⁴(SSP have clear stand that backward will get 60% in 100). He made all the efforts to destroy the Congress system. R. L. Chandapuri of Indian National Backward Classes Federation tried his best that backward castes must have a separate political party of their own. He believed that the caste system was the root of all the problems of the country. He told Lohia that a vicious circle was created by counter-revolutionary forces led by upper castes Hindu imperialism³⁵.

Lohia was convinced that the formation of the socialist party fulfilled a historic heed, because all other parties had demonstrated their irrelevance and they were not suitable to the task of India's socio-economic transformation. Hence, he ruled out any alliance or electoral adjustment with them. He was sure that Congress would continue to have its fortunes declining and it was like a house on the verge of total collapse and sooner or later, its occupants would desert it. He gave a seven-year plan to power³⁶. When he did not get expected success in 1952 and 1957 election, he revised his seven year plan to power. He started talking about a hundred year programme to fight injustice³⁷. He had concluded that not a single party is in a situation to challenge the Congress. He argued that anti-Congressism must bring together all the non-Congress parties irrespective of political and ideological differences with the overriding consideration of putting an end to Congress rule and the dominance of the Nehru family³⁸.

Riding over the new anti-Congress wave, Lohia entered the Lok Sabha in 1963 through a bye-election from Farukhabad (U.P). He campaigned against Congress and projected it as responsible bodies for diplomatic failure in 1962-China invasion in India. Almost all the political parties from Swatantrata Party and Jan Sangh to the CPI that mattered in the area were supported by him. Lohia himself went to Jaunpur to campaign for the Jan Sangh candidate Deendayal Upadhyay³⁹. He had great zeal and passion to unite all the non-Congress parties, irrespective of their ideology policy with sole aim of not overwhelming, but also destroying the Congress

³⁴Ashok Kuamr Sinha. *Jannayak Karpoori Tharkur*, Vishal Publication: New Delhi, 2006, P- 57.

³⁵ Girish Mishra and Braj Kumar Panday. *Sociology and Economics of Casteism in India: A Studay of Bihar*. Pragati Publication, New Delhi, 1996, P- 330

³⁶ Girish Mishra and Braj K. Panday, *Rammahohar Lohia: The Man and his Ism*. Pragati Publication, New Delhi, 1996 , P- 14

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., P- 126

³⁹ Ibid.,

for all time to come. He did not want only a front of non-Congress parties, but an entirely new party out of their amalgamation. The new party of his dream was to combine the entire good programmes of the existing non-Congress political forces from Communists to Jan Sangh. It was to integrate “revolutionary zeal” of the communist and “nationalist vigor” of the Jan Sangh⁴⁰. In June 1965, the socialist party at its party meeting at Bombay formally adopted non-Congressism as its creed.

For his strategy of non-Congressism, Lohia made a number of formulations which are as follows: first, no single party is able to challenge the Congress alone due to its strength. Therefore, there is no question of overthrowing the Congress from power as the country did not have proportional representation. All the Opposition parties should unite against the Congress. Second, all the Opposition parties should work together for overthrowing the Congress government. If every party would work on its own ways then it would be difficult to challenge the Congress and it would continue its rule with all its attendant evils. Third, ideologically divergent parties can frame a broad common minimum programme and build a consensus on uniting against Congress. Fourth, Lohia argued that the Communist Party and the Jan Sangh are less harmful for the country than the Congress. Hence, the theory of equidistance must be buried fathoms deep and ties should be forged with the CPI, Jan Sangh, Swatantrata and so on to destroy the Congress for ever. Fifth, the Congress won the elections not on its merit but by the default of its rivals. The other political parties quarreled among themselves and split the anti-Congress votes in such a way that the Congress with only a minority of votes came to power again and again. Sixth, the no-Congress Parties should frame a common minimum programme on a broad area of issues that can be amalgamated to provide an alternative to the Congress to the people in the upcoming election.

It is evident that Lohia had proposed his thesis of non-Congressism in 1966, just year before the fourth General election. The SVD government which, consisted the Communist to the Jan Sangh, formed in 1967 on the basis of ‘non-Congressism’ and ‘catch-all Opposition’. All the Opponents of the Congress came to unite to keep the Congress out of power. During this time, the Congress was suffering from rampant faction that hindered to make Congress-led coalition government in Bihar.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Bihar had been the cradle and birth place of socialist laboratory for quota politics. The bulk of mobilization and consolidation of OBCs took place around reservation policies as suggested by two primary commissions- Kaka Kalelkar Commission and Mandal Commission. Another OBCs' commission was Mungerilal Commission that polarized the upper castes and lower castes in Bihar. Before 1977 election, the OBCs were not a political force but after defeat of the Congress nationally and in ten states in 1977, the backward classes emerged as an important factor in national politics⁴¹. The Mungerilal Commission recommendations were implemented by Karpoori Thakur in Bihar and at the same time Mandal Commission was appointed to suggest reservation for OBCs in governmental and educational institution. Bindeshwari Prasad Mandal, a former Chief Minister of Bihar, was appointed as its chairman.

The first Backward Classes Commission was appointed on January 29, 1953 under the chairmanship of a former disciple of Gandhi, Kaka Kalelkar. Its report relied heavily on the concept of caste for defining the OBCs. Caste was not the only criterion but it was the key element, the commission, therefore, established a list of 2,399 castes, representing about 32% of the Indian population, as forming the bulk of the "socially and educationally backward classes" that need affirmative action programme⁴².

The first Backward Classes Commission's members selected four criteria for defining the OBCs: 1) low social position in the traditional caste hierarchy of Hindu society; 2) lack of general educational advancement among the major section of a caste or community; 3) inadequate or no representation in the Government service; and 4) inadequate representation in the field of trade, commerce and industry⁴³. The Commission's recommendation was severely criticized from all corners especially from the Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru in order to respond regarding Kalelkar Commission argued that this Commission's recommendation would lead to the deep division in the societies and politics.

Apart from the first Backward Classes Commission, the All India Backward Class Federation tried to mobilize the OBCs on 60 percent reservation issue due to

⁴¹ Francine , R. Farnkel, *India's Political Economy* , 1947-2004, OUP: New Delhi, P- 627

⁴² Christophe Jafferlot. The Rise Of The Other Backward Classes In Hindi Belt , *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1, 2000, P- 88

more than half of their population. The chairman of the Federation suggested to the politicians who were concerned with the lower caste politics to raise the reservation issue. Even they suggested that backward people must have their own political party to come in power and empower the marginalized people of the lower caste. Among the lower castes; Yadavs, koeri and the kurmi are the dominant backward caste in Bihar. Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav- a Congress leader from Bihar- declared that the Yadavs were leading the 90 per cent of the Indian population which were backward and B.P. Mandal, who was the then Chief Minister in Bihar, declared that the Yadav should lead the revolution.⁴⁴

On 20th December 1978, the Prime Minister Morarji Desai announced the government's decision to appoint the second Backward Classes Commission, whose terms of references were close to those of the earlier one: it had to determine the criteria defining the OBCs and to recommend the measures, such as reservation in the administration, which could contribute to their social emancipation.⁴⁵ Twenty years after the appointment of the first Backward Classes Commission, the center offered quota politics that was the demand of the majority who were deprived from centuries. In contrast to the Kalelkar Commission, this body had no upper caste members but only OBCs,⁴⁶ of whom three out of five were MPS or ex-MPS. The chairman of the Commission, Bindeshwari Prasad Mandal, was a Yadav who had been elected MP in the State in 1967 on SSP ticket and who had been briefly the Chief Minister in 1968. The Mandal Commission advocated the socialist policy of positive discrimination. Its report says:

To read unequal as equal is to perpetuate inequality. When we allow weak and strong to compete on equal footing, we are loading the dice in favour of the strong and holding only mock competition in which the weaker partner is destined to failure right from the start.⁴⁷

According to the Mandal Commission, the caste system was the root cause of structural inequality and therefore notion of merit could not apply in the same way as

⁴⁴ Christophe Jafferlot, *India's Silent revolution*, P- 235.

⁴⁵ Frankel R. Francine has used the term Dominant Caste in her article 'Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar: Breakdown in Brahminical order' I Francine R. Frankel and M S A Rao (eds): *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: The Decline of social order*. OUP, New Delhi, 1989. p-115.

⁴⁶ One of them, Dina Bandhu Sahu had to resign on the ground of ill-health, but he was replaced by a Scheduled castes former MP, L.R. Naik.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Christophe Jafferlot's *India's Silent revolution*.p-321.

they did in an individualistic society: it is an amalgam of native endowments and environmental privileges. Yet, Commission did not regard caste as the sole criterion for the definition of the OBCs. In fact, it evolved an index based on eleven indicators subdivided into three categories- social, educational and economic. These three categories determined that the particular group is backward or not. This Commission recommended 27 per cent reservation to OBCs in government jobs and educational institutions funded by the government.

The V.P. Singh government announced to implement the Mandal Commission report. Soon after V.P. Singh announced the implementation of the reservation of the OBCs, upper caste students mobilized organizations such as the Anti-Mandal Commission Forum which was based in Delhi University. Of its 19 strong executive committee members, 17 were from the landowning families from Bihar.⁴⁸ In Uttar Pradesh, the Arakshan Virodhi Sangharse Samiti (Committee for the Struggle against Reservations) and the Mandal Ayog Virodi Sangharse Samiti (Committee for the struggle against the Mandal Commission) were founded by students who were not only from the upper castes but also from the lower middle class. They wanted to abolish all reservations including reservations for the Scheduled Castes, a demand which led the Dalit and OBCs leaders to get closer.⁴⁹

The height of the protest reached when the most famous case of self-immolation by students protesting against Mandal was that of Rajiv Goswami, a twenty-year old student from a middle class Brahmin family and student activist in Delhi University. He survived despite of severe injuries and became the symbol of the movement and was elected as a president of DUSU in 1991. Against the Anti-Mandal agitation, soon pro-Mandal mobilization started in which Sharad Yadav led the situations and claimed: we will show them within 15 days how many people are behind us if they don't come back to their scene....V.P Singh went to Patna for a rally where slogans such as 'Brahmin saala desh chhodo'! (Bastard Brahmins, get out of the country!) were heard. Thus, 1990 was marked by an exacerbation of the cleavage between upper castes and lower castes, an atmosphere which explains at that time the emotional value of the OBC as a social category⁵⁰. One of the important achievements

⁴⁸ Ibid., p-345.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.,347.

of the mobilization around Mandal Commission was that lower castes consolidated against the Congress's rule which were dominated by Brahmins at the time of its downfall, especially in Bihar.

Congress: From Catch-All to Catch-None and Its Decline

The Congress has passed through different phases in terms of support base, ideology, leadership, organizational structure, and programmes in its course of history since its birth. Once Congress was elite debating group organized by liberal modern educated intelligentsia, transformed into mass organization by popular freedom movement such as Champaran, non-cooperation and civil-disobedience movement led by Mr. M.K. Gandhi. The Congress was an organization of movement character which transformed completely into political party to capture power at centre as well as states in post-independent India. Still, party had catch-all character and grand-coalition to attract diverse social background to secure the majority of seats in the Parliament and the state assemblies. Till 1967, the Congress had position of dominance in Indian political system in which it had been called "party of consensus" and "party of pressure". The overwhelming support of all section of the societies and from all segments, the Congress was called an "umbrella party" in which members from the left segment to the Right segment were present in the Party.

Significant changes occurred in the Congress when Mrs. Indira Gandhi took the charge of the Prime Minister of India. Nature of the Congress changed from the Party of consensus to the Party of personalization and centralization of power. Deinstitutionalization in the Indian politics was also started by Indira Gandhi that led to the JP movement and emergency. During her regime the Congress faced its split twice in 1969 and in 1978 respectively. The last Congress was popular due to personality of Indira Gandhi named as Congress (Indira) which means Congress remained with the synonyms of the rule of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. In Bihar significant changes occurred in the Congress during this time due to factionalism and rampant defection. Once, the Party was known as the Party which was concerned with the people who are deprived, marginalized, and excluded from the mainstreams, it changed into the Party in which leaders were more concerned about their personal power and personal interest. The umbrella character of the Party drastically reduced

and at the same time intelligentsia left the Party on its own due to arrogant behavior of the leaders.⁵¹

The 1980 to 1990, the Congress ruled Bihar but faced the crisis of governability due to few reasons such as, to stop the rise of crime in the state, to stop the rampant caste conflict in which thousands of Dalits and poor have been killed by the private militia of the upper castes, the Bihar Press Bill, which erupted a violent protest in anti- and pro- support of the Bill in which media was badly treated by the Bihar government, and to protect the security to the innocent Muslim people in the state who were traditional supporters of the Congress. The party was also not united at leadership level. In the last five year rule of the Congress in Bihar, the leadership has been changed four times from Rajputs to Brahmins. Its traditional voters such as Dalits' and Muslims' concern were not focused by the Party and it was fragile from within. There was a need to strike once to disintegrate and it was done by the united Janata Dal in 1990 elections.

What happened to the Congress which once had catch-all character but could not succeed in catching even a single broad group such as upper castes, Dalits, OBCs or Muslims? Upper castes were dispersed in different parties such as Congress, BJP, and Janata Dal and the other castes were in support of the Janata Dal. The Hindutva ideology of the BJP attracted the upper castes and they fully supported them. The Congress had nothing to offer in the election campaign to attract the voters. The nature of the Party changed from catch-all character to catch-none in Bihar which later resulted in decline in the electoral base.

This chapter dealt with how the rise of OBCs politics shaped the institutional decline of the Congress which had changed its character over the period of time. The other backward classes were consolidated around the reservation politics which was led under the guidance of strong leaders such as Rammanohar Lohia, Karpoori Thakur, Sharad Yadav, Nitish Kumar and Laloo Prasad Yadav. Lohia was opposing the move of the Congress since independence that is why he developed his thesis of non-Congressism and promoted the quota and socialist politics. He did not care about ideology to mobilize the parties to oust the Congress from power. He was very much associated with the backward class politics and joined hand with All India Backward

⁵¹ Bhawani Sen Gupta. 'Crisis of the Indian state', EPW, vol.23, no-16, 1988, P- 764-765.

Class Federation to mobilize the lower castes. The consolidation of the lower castes took place around reservation politics which pushed the OBCs with the Dalits closer than ever before due to anti-reservation mobilization of the upper castes. The decade also witnessed the rise of the Hindutva ideology that attracted the upper castes who already got tired with affiliation to the Congress. The rise of the BJP and OBCs politics was at the expense of the Congress which had nothing new to offer to the electors. OBCs politics emerged due to democratization of the politics as well as society while BJP emerged as a reactionary party which offered new choices to the people, especially to the upper castes. In the due course of time, Congress became a fragile and weak party which broke down internally first and externally thereafter. On the one hand the Party strength and the lack of leadership appeared at center with the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi on the other hand its leaders scattered in Bihar due to deinstitutionalization of the Congress. In contrast, the Opposition was united and ready to challenge the Congress in the electoral field as the ground was already built to oust the Party from power. This time the Opposition took democratic engineering policy to attract the voters as they declared the candidacy from all section of the society whereas Congress was still dominated by upper castes and their candidacy was also dominated by the same. The democratization of the society as well as politics was not compatible with the Congress organization that is why they failed to attract the electors in 1990 elections.

Conclusion

Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee, a provincial unit of the Indian National Congress, was basically dominated by social and political conservatism since its birth. It was organized by the feudal gentry and educated young persons belonging to the upper strata of the society who were working for political freedom from the British Raj. Rajendra Prasad, a famous leader of the BPCC and also very active at national level, was a political conservative leader and he was followed by other leaders as well. In the early 1930s, when the lower castes of the societies, viz. Yadavas, Koeris and the Kurmis formed Triveni Sangh, a caste association to raise political consciousness, to mobilize against the oppression of the upper caste and demand adequate share in the political structure of the state. BPCC formed the Other Backward Federation to do the same rather than accommodate the Triveni Sangh. Organization remained in the hand of the upper caste dominance ignoring proper democratization of the Party. A few leaders of the BPCC, however in limited numbers, played an important role for democratization and redistribution of the natural resources, especially land, through Bihar Land Reform Act. But this legislation was challenged and consequently failed due to strong opposition from within the Party, which revealed its conservatism and dominance of the feudal mind set.

Due to its political conservatism, the progressive leaders of the BPCC either quit the Party as well as politics or joined other political organization and movements such as Kisan Sabha, Socialist party, Bhudan movement and so on. In pre-independent Bihar, the Congress was an organization of the movement with broad ideology and accommodative politics in early days of the freedom struggle such as Champaran Satyagrah, Non-Cooperation movement, Civil-Disobedience movement and the like. However, its broad based ideology as well as accommodative politics and movement declined in the post-independent Bihar. The strength of the party and its intra-democracy started eroding when the first Congress government was formed in 1937. This process increased in the post-independent era and Congress remained a political party and its appeal as a social and political movement largely declined. The share of its fruits was claimed by each leader, pertaining to the upper caste especially, and it led to the factionalism in the Party on the line of castes. The first decade after

the independence, BPCC was marked by bi-polar factionalism which was transformed into multi-polar factionalism in the later period.

The factionalism was present in every party during that time for fulfilling the personal ambition but what were the special characteristics of the factionalism within the Congress was that it culminated in the negative factionalism. In 1967, when the Congress lost its full majority in the state assembly in Bihar, but still was the largest party, it failed to take support of the other leaders within the Party. Even the Party bosses wrote letter to the governor that if particular leader does not have consent of the majority within the party then he cannot be invited to form the government. When M. P. Sinha, a lieutenant of the late former Chief Minister of Bihar S.K Sinha, claimed to form the coalition government in Bihar in 1967, B.N. Jha, another leader of the Congress, wrote letter to the governor that M. P. Sinha does not have the support of the Congress Legislative Party. The nature of such factionalism (negative factionalism) enhanced the process of defection in the Party. That is why such weaknesses of the Congress benefited the united front in 1967 to form the SVD government.

The issue of land was the main contention of the Bihar politics since 1930s. The Kisan Sabha, in its early phase, collaborated with the Congress but due to its political conservatism, Kisan Sabha launched a separate movement in Bihar for land distribution. When the Congress formed government and framed the Land Reform Act, Bihar was the first state to legislate such kind of law. However, it failed to implement the law largely due to the dominance of feudal landlord in the government as well as in the Party and its opposition, especially Bhumihars who had majority of the share in the land in Bihar.

The decline of broad ideology resulted in the separation of the Socialist in 1948 headed by Rammanohar Lohia and the Gandhian group headed by Jayprakash Narayan. Moving away off such leaders who had mass base support as well as ideology transformed the Congress from an organization of the movement to a complete political party. It is significant to note that the giant socialist leader Rammanohar Lohia propounded the thesis of non-Congressism and mobilized the lower castes to overthrow the Congress government in Bihar. He even went ahead to compromise with socialist ideology and promoted the united opposition from Left

parties to Rightist parties. The decline of ideology of the Congress then led to the decline of the party strength and intra-party democracy.

The application of universal adult suffrage and parliamentary democracy in India played an important role in empowering the lower caste due to their political strength where number of vote counts. The political empowerment implied socio-economic empowerment as well. There was growing realization among the backward classes that having their own political party and greater share in the political sphere would lead to better opportunity and all around development. There were demands from the backward classes to promote the issue of reservation up to 60 percent for the people of lower caste in the government jobs and educational system. Their welfare is only possible through reservation policy otherwise the prevailed systems could never do justice with the lower caste who has been undermined by the present governments since independence.

The upper caste dominance in the Congress Party never tried to democratize the Party on the proportional basis of the number while OBCs had strong aspiration for their social and political claim. The Congress in Bihar remained in the hands of the “twice born” people since its birth till its decline, never offered space to other sections of the society which they deserved. This arrogant attitude of the leaders of the Congress never offered adequate representation of the lower caste leaders in the state cabinet. Congress Ministry was always dominated by upper castes and seat allotment to contest the elections in the state was also dominated by the same.

Among the political forces in Bihar, the Socialists were especially quick to mobilize the lower castes on the reservation issue. Lohia and Karpoori Thakur’s approach, in particular, was thus responsible for the early inroads made by the socialist parties that successively set up in Bihar. His ‘quota politics’ compelled the Congress to set up a commission to recommend the policy for reservation in government jobs and educational institutions. A Commission (Mungerilal Commission) was set up by the Congress but its recommendations were not implemented by the Party. Its recommendations were implemented by Karpoori Thakur when he was Chief Minister of the state. This step of the Karpoori Thakur’s government benefitted the socialist in mobilizing the OBCs along the line of reservation and castes whereas the Congress always hesitated to do so. Even when

Mungerilal Commission was implemented, the section of the Congress criticized the steps taken by the government. They argued that reservation policy would divide the society on the basis of caste when society is already divided along the line of castes.

One of the important setbacks to the Congress in Bihar as well as at centre was JP movement, which gave a strong blow to the Congress rule. Movement initiated from Gujarat agitation led by students, culminated in demand of resignation of the Congress government in Gujarat in March, 1974. The Bihar agitation started on the line of Gujarat agitation but it had well organized programme and institutionalized form of protest. The strong leadership provided by the Jayaprakash Naraya gave momentum to the movement and it became more forceful. When post emergency elections were declared, the Congress was ousted from power at center as well as in the state. Janata Party formed government in the leadership of Morarji Desai, a former Congress leader, at center and in the leadership of Karpoori Thakur in Bihar. This movement gave birth to new leaders from backward classes such as Laloo Prasad Yadav, Nitish Kumar, Ramvilas Paswan, Sharad Yadav and others who succeeded in mobilizing the lower castes against the Congress rule.

The JP movement eroded the electoral base of the Congress and in contrast strengthened the support for the Opposition Party. In the post-Janata government, the Congress was benefited by the divided opposition in 1980 state assembly elections and 'Indira Wave' worked in 1984 elections. Ten years government rule from 1980 to 1990 by the Congress measurably failed to secure the life of the poor, particularly the Dalits who had been hunted by the upper caste private militia. The Harijan-hunting was a common feature of Bihar politics that fostered the cult of gun in caste rivalries. The word which was very famous in the Bhojpuri and Magahi belt of Bihar, Gohar, a term representing a phenomenon so indigenous that it is difficult to find an equivalent term in another culture and language was a common phenomenon. It can be loosely translated as 'attack' but that is only a small aspect of the actual process. It includes summoning friends, relatives, armed retainer and dependent clients to help avenge real or perceived assaults on the social, economic or cultural position of the counterattacking party. This communal phenomenon was neither solved by the Congress government nor were they able to manage the issue. Thus, Dalits, who were traditional supporters of the Congress diverted to the strong opposition, Janata Dal.

Some of the developments that took place during the last decade of the Congress rule had negative impact on the overall image of the Congress. Whereas, there was a sharp rise in crime, in the wake of communal violence in Bhagalpur Muslims started distancing themselves from the Congress. On the other hand, the notorious Bihar Press Bill disgusted the media, intellectual and political activism in the state. There were massive protests against the Bill organised by media group supported by student, teacher, labour union, and opposition parties. The crime rate at this juncture was all time high which was not controlled by the state government and insecurity prevailed everywhere. The law and order situation in Bihar deteriorated gradually which started posing questions on the governance of the Congress. In 1989, a communal violence erupted in Bhagalpur which was the worst communal riot in Bihar since independence, in which more than 1200 innocent people were killed. Majority of the people who were killed in the riot were innocent poor weaver who traditionally worked in fabric silk, and had nothing to do with the riot. This violence was the worst communal frenzy and madness in Bihar. The Congress did not take satisfactory steps to protect the life of the Muslims in order to secure the Hindu votes in upcoming elections. This incident diverted the Muslim community to other parties as the Congress failed to secure the lives of the innocent Muslims.

Whereas Dalits and Muslims suffered the most in the wake of growing communal violence in the state, Congress government largely proved ineffective in securing their rights and life. Accordingly, the Congress then could not retain Dalits and Muslims within its fold, who were the traditional voters of the party. The other traditional voters, upper castes, also moved towards BJP due to its strong Hindutva ideology. And the rise of OBCs politics accelerated in the decline of the Congress electoral base in Bihar.

BPCC lost its regional autonomy since Indira Gandhi's regime and never gained its freedom to act as a provincial unit. All the decisions were taken by the central high command and party also lost its intra-party democracy and cohesiveness. The centralization of the Party hindered in the democratization of the Party on proportional basis. In the last decade of its rule, BPCC remained as a platform to fight for personal and caste aspiration of the upper castes. The leadership crisis became more evident within BPCC, and in the absence of unanimous leadership

that could mobilize the party on strong ideological grounds, the Congress Party failed to project itself as the powerful political force in the state.

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