

**PARTY POLITICS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH,
1966 — 1986.**

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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1990



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D E C L A R A T I O N

Certified that this dissertation entitled
"PARTY POLITICS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH, 1966 -1986"
submitted by RAM PAUL, is in partial fulfilment
for the degree of Master of Philosophy of this
university. This dissertation has not been previously
submitted for any other degree of this university
and is his own work.

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

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PREFACE

This work is an attempt at understanding the role of different political parties of Himachal Pradesh from 1966, when it became a Union Territory after merging some of the hill areas of Punjab with Himachal doubling its territory and population, to 1986. Interest for this was generated when I was doing my undergraduate studies at Dharamsala.

I express, with gratitude my thanks to the help rendered by my supervisor, Dr. Zoya Hasan at every stage of this Dissertation by going through the whole manuscript patiently and giving valuable advise on many points of the political processes.

I acknowledge the invaluable support given by my parents - Shri Diwan Chand and Smt. Chhangi. Hence I dedicate this work to my parents. But for the financial assistance from my brother Shri Punnu Ram and brother-in-law Shri Hirdya Ram, this Dissertation would not have been completed. Through discussions my friend Prem Sagar moulded at a very early stage of my life. No words are enough to express my thanks to my room-mate Kondapalli Srikanth and

my classmate Shyam Sundar Chaturvedi whose consistent help through discussions and suggestions during my J.N.U. years contributed a lot. Needless to add, entire responsibility lies with me for any errors or opinions expressed in this work.

I acknowledge the delightful distraction of Sunil K.Ganjoo, Murali, Sanjay Tiwary, Seema and Minu.


RAM ← PAUL

INTRODUCTION

Himachal Pradesh was formed on 15th April, 1948 by the merger of 31 erstwhile Punjab Hill States which had achieved the status of Chief Commissioners Province. In 1966, under the Punjab Re-organisation Act some hill areas of Punjab like Kangra, Kulu, Lahaul & Spiti and Shimla were merged with the Himachal Pradesh. Then it was given the status of a Union Territory. But owing to the consistent struggle and demand of the hill people, Himachal Pradesh became a full fledged state on 25th January, 1971.

The people of Himachal Pradesh were living in acute poverty, illiteracy and backwardness. The socio-political movements in other parts of India affected political developments of Himachal Pradesh. The hill people participated in the struggle to remove the autocratic rule of Rajas, Ranas, and Thakurs who indulged in the oppressive practices of Begar (forced-unpaid labour) and Rahkar (transit taxes). The pace of political development remained slow due to lack of transportation, communication and economic backwardness. Because of the difficult topography of the region people were unable to communicate with other inhabitants of the region properly. Another problem was of the absence of a common and well developed language which prevented the people from making contact with each other.

This was a transitional phase of the hill society from tradition to modernity where the party politics played a vital role in transforming the structure of politics. The politics which was autocratic previously seemed to have become democratic as a result of certain popular movements led by the people against the feudalism and colonialism. Ranbir Sharma in his study of Party Politics in Himachal Pradesh gives a political history of Himachal Pradesh.¹ It stresses the growth of political consciousness amongst the people and their consistent struggle against the local rulers and the British. It also contains information on the emergence of different political parties in the state. He has discussed the issues of leadership and factionalism which gives significant insights in to the political trends in 1960s when Yashwant Singh Parmar was the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh. Another significant work is that of Javeed Alam on peasants politics in Himachal Pradesh. Javeed Alam in Domination and Dissent - Peasants and Politics, has examined the dominance of Congress Party and the way it exploited the people during emergency which resulted in its defeat in 1977 General Elections. He has discussed how the human rights were violated and what was the response of the

1. Ranbir Sharma, Party Politics in a Himalayan State, New Delhi, 1977.

masses. Some other works are that of T.R. Sharma and S. Bhatnagar on the politics of Himachal Pradesh.²

This study Party Politics in Himachal Pradesh, 1966-1986 attempts to examine the different political trends in the political scenarios of the hill region in the last two decades. The study focusses on the period 1966-86 which was dominated by the Congress except for the period from 1977-1980 when Janata Party came to power. The Congress which emerged in the state on the infrastructure provided by the Praja Mandals was able to retain power for over three decades. The other major political party namely Bhartiya Jan Sangh (BJS) old form of Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) took place in the state on the grounds provided by the Rashtriya Swayamsevek Sangh (RSS), on the issue of merger of the hill areas of Punjab with Punjab Himachal Pradesh in 1966 both the major political parties the Congress and the Bhartiya Jan Sangh were at logger heads. Congress Party was favouring the merger while the Bhartiya Jan Sangh opposed it and wanted to merge Himachal Pradesh with Punjab in order to make Maha Punjab. This was the crucial period in Himachal political history and political development. Since the Congress supported struggle for the creation of a full fledged district state, it was able to rule over the state for decades.

2. Sharma, T.R.(ed) New Challenges in Indian Politics, Uppal Pub. House, New Delhi, 1986.

The different political, economic, religious, social and geographical factors which contributed to the dominance of the Congress are discussed. Many new trends which emerged in the State politics with the changing pattern of economy and politics of the state, growth of political consciousness and the role of different political parties before and after the achievement of statehood are also examined in the study.

The first chapter of this dissertation analyses the emergence of political parties in Himachal Pradesh. Political consciousness amongst the people under certain socio-economic conditions which was responsible for the growth of political movements leading to the formation of Himachal Pradesh, are discussed.

Peoples demand of statehood and the role of different political parties are examined in the second chapter. The movement for statehood was organised mainly on constitutional lines unlike some of the North-Eastern States of India such as Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya. What standpoints were taken by the people of Himachal Pradesh on its viability and what was the response of Union of India are examined in this chapter.

The third chapter focusses on the different factors for dominance of the Congress Party, violation of civil liberties

during the emergency period which led to downfall of the Congress rule and reemergence of the Congress Party in 1980.

The fourth or the last chapter deals with the emergence of the Janata Party as the ruling party, its functioning under the umbrella of the RSS elements which contributed to the downfall of the party in 1980. The feeling of old Himachal and new Himachal amongst the people is also analysed.

The position of the different political parties in the legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha elections and voters participation in yearwise elections are shown in the tables at the end of all the chapters.

CHAPTER - I

EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN HIMACHAL
PRADESH : THE FORMATIVE STAGE

The people of the hills, called 'PAHARI'¹, were under the autocratic rule of the 'Rajas', 'Ranas'² and 'Thakurs'³, who remained wedded to the age-old traditions of dynastic rule. But, after 1815 their rulers and principalities were placed under the control and supervision of the British Commissioner of Delhi and later on, of Punjab through their representatives, the Superintendent of Shimla Hill States and Commissioner of Punjab in 1849.⁴

The hill people were living under object poverty which had stunted their political and economic growth. Various social customs had dominated the hill society for centuries. Consequently, these people remained cut off from the national

1. Generally translated as the inhabitants of the hills.
2. The term 'Rana' is used as either the title given to a petty chief, or as caste name. It is synonymous with the Sanskrit term 'Samanta' and Thakur.
3. The term Thakur comes from the local word 'Thak' meaning blood of the hill region. Thus the Thakurs became hereditary.
4. Charak, S.S., History and Culture of the Himalaya, Vol. II, New Delhi. p. 228.

mainstream. For instance, polyandry was prevalent in Lahaul and Spiti, Kinnaur, Mahasu and certain other higher reaches of the region.⁵ A major contributory factor to the persistence of these customs was the economic backwardness of the area. Because of a lack of financial resources all brothers of a family could not marry separately. Thus, keeping one wife in common for all brothers had become the social custom and an economic necessity. In certain feudal houses of Kangra, Mandi and Chamba, polygamy was a symbol of high status and prestige. Certain other superstitions occupied a predominant place in the traditional society which too had blocked the growth of political awareness among the people.⁷

In the feudalistic social structure the people were

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5. For a detailed study on polyandry and polygamy, See-Parmar, Dr. Y.S., Polyandry in the Himalayas, New Delhi, 1975.
 6. Polygamy still exists in the districts of Kangra, Chamba, Mandi and some other regions.
 7. The hill people still have blind faith in their local deities. They perform certain rituals to please their gods. But it has become very less comparatively to old times when people used to send their children to schools after taking the permission of their local deities.

broadly divided in two classes - one which had control over the resources and means of production and depending upon the pre-capitalist forms of exploitation of labour. This class can be said to be synonymous with the class of Ranas, and Thakurs; The second class who worked for them can be composed with the peasantry, labourers and employees working for the princes and the feudal houses. All lower castes including Koli, Duma, Kumhar, Chamar and Hali constituted the group of agricultural labourers. Some people from higher castes such as Brahmins did not have a control over the resources. They worked for feudal houses. Some of these groups performed labour on the land of feudal lords in the form of 'begar'⁸

As Lenin says, classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy.⁹ In the Pahari society of Himachal Pradesh the means of production were owned by the feudal lords who had captured large chunks of fertile land.

8. Unpaid labour.

9. Lenin, V.I., Collected Works, Vol. 29, Moscow, p. 421.

which was the only source of livelihood for the people. These lands were given on tenure to the tenants who came from the lower strata of the society.¹⁰ The tenurial system stands for cultivation of lands by the lower stratum who had been given lands by feudal lords for an uncertain period. The cultivator, called tenant had to give half of the product to the owner of the land. All capital and labour was provided by the tenant for cultivation.

In Himachal Pradesh the Raja was the supreme head in all spheres, be it, political, economic or religious. The divinity of kingship is reflected in a form of oath common in all hill states, this was the 'Raja-ki-Darohi',¹¹ disobedience to which was regarded as treason. Thus all the subjects obeyed the orders considering it as the order of God.

10. Despite the implementation of the Land Acquisition Acts of 1953 and 1972, sizable land holdings are still prevalent in some parts of the state of Himachal Pradesh.

11. Translated as loyalty towards king.

Under the peculiar feudal system of the hills, each principality formed a separate and independent piece of property in which the Raja was the sole proprietor and the fountain head of all the rights regarding land and other powers. All the other people living on the soil were his subjects and servants and held their lands under obligation of military and other feudal services provided by them to the Raja in particular conventions. In such a structure the Raja was the landlord of the whole of his Raj (Kingdom). When the Mughal emperors conquered the hill Rajas, the latter were granted the titles of Zamindars, i.e., the larger land holders.¹² This title was granted by the Mughals to the hill chiefs in order to collect revenues from the people through them.¹³

Revenue and feudal services were appropriated in three different forms. Firstly, the respectable men from good families who paid in cash only, were employed as soldiers or as attendants of the State officials. Secondly, those who paid revenue in cash and kind were employed as soldiers or

12. Hutchinson and Vogel, History of the Punjab Hill States, Vol. I, Lahore, 1953, p. 24.

13. *ibid.*

in carrying loads for troops on a campaign. Thirdly, those who in addition to paying revenue in cash and kind were required to furnish begar or unpaid forced labour in the capital.

Immediately below the rank of the Raja there were feudal barons, some of them being Ranas and Thakurs whose ancestors enjoyed partial or complete independence before the advent of Rajas who reduced them to the position of vassals and subordinates. Others had received their titular ranks, as well as their ^JJagirs (property) from the ruling chiefs. The highest positions were thus occupied by this class.

The prominent feature of the feudal hill society was that the larger and fertile lands were occupied by the upper class feudal lords, Ranas and Thakurs, which gave rise to a sort of slavery. In the real sense of the term it can be said that it was the system which stood for exploitation of man by man. The people who did not have any land worked for the feudal lords and gradually became their slaves for their livelihood.

In the princely states of Himachal Pradesh most of the people depended on agriculture and a very few on other profession like handicrafts, whereas all the best lands were held by the feudal lords. In this pattern of economy, the mode of production was feudal and the common people had very little share in it as the larger share of production and surplus went to the owners of the land. Land ownership was the foundation on which landlords obtain unpaid labour or produce of the land. Thus the condition of the people of Himachal Pradesh was one of wretchedness before independence especially those who were entirely dependent on land.

The above discussion reveals the economic backwardness of the people which kept them politically unaware. The difficult topography of the region was also responsible for the backwardness of the people. The high mountains, lack of means of transport and communication kept the people isolated from the rest of the country. The freezing climate of the region was another factor contributing to the backwardness of the society in which people had to face problems while moving from one place to another. This also led to the people having social and regional differentiation

All these aspects resulted in the social, cultural, economic and political backwardness of the people of this region of the Himalayas in spite of its potential economic resources such as dense forests, rivers horticulture. Whereas Shimla gave an impression of an oasis in a desert claiming prosperity. Though it was developed by the British for their own comfort, from where the later movements for liberation in the hills were started.

Political awakening among the hill people came very slowly. The autocratic rulers were not ready to leave their high castles. Still there were sporadic incidents of resentment against the prevailing feudal system. The first incident that took place was in Rampur where the people revolted against the high handedness of the Government officials and 'begars'.¹⁴

To begin with the hill people took up arms against slavery and the age old system of begar and Rahkar¹⁵. People of the hills also fought against feudalism. There are many

14. Ibid, p. 288.

15. The tax paid to Raja by the people while crossing the boundary of his kingdom or any bridge on river built by him.

examples of popular revolt against terror and injustice. On 13th July, 1939 a meeting of the Shimla Hill States Praja Mandals - under the leadership of Bhagnal Southa of Jubbal was held at Shimla. The meeting urged the Rana of Dhami to stop repression against popular movements, to grant remission of half of the land revenue, to lift ban on Praja Mandals and to associate public men with the administration. They sent a memorandum and urged the Rana to accept all the demands failing which people would start Satyagraha.¹⁶

The Rana took it as a personal insult and arrested the messenger. Accordingly, a group of people marched towards Dhami. The Dhami police arrested all the marchers. The people who had gathered in the outskirts of Dhami to welcome the Satyagrahis, finding their leaders arrested, marched towards the Rana's palace shouting anti-Rana and pro-people slogans. The panicky Rana ordered firing on them. Four persons were killed and several were injured. But ultimately the people were successful in capturing the Rana's palace.¹⁷ Then the Imperial power came to the rescue of the Rana.

16. Charak, S.S., op.cit. p. 290.

17. Ibid.

The state of Dhamsi was given to the Government of East Punjab. This incident highlights the revolutionary spirit amongst the hill people against the tortures of feudalism.

The incident of Dhamsi also attracted national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawahar Lal Nehru. The Individual Satyagraha launched by Mahatma Gandhi was conducted in Kangra district very successfully where a large number of people many of the Congress leaders offered Satyagraha.¹⁸

The Punjab Hill States, generally known as Shimla Hill States, were twenty one in number with nine feudatories. The Ranas ruled these small states and the people had to work very hard in the difficult terrain. The Himalayan People's States Federation was formed in 1937 to voice the common grievances of these States such as begar, Rahkar - extra revenue taxes and forced labour.¹⁹ The Indian National Congress had encouraged the Praja Mandals and Himalayan People's

18. Sharma, Dr. Ranbir, Party Politics in a Himalayan State, New Delhi, 1977, p. 56.

19. Patil, S.H., The Congress Party and the Princely States, Bombay, 1981, pp. 76-77.

States Federation to carry on the struggle for the removal of economic exploitation and establishing responsible governments in these states. Among the Praja Mandals in these states the Sirmur Praja Mandal was very active. This Praja Mandal organized agitations against the agrarian policy of the state. The Dhami agitation was based on the plans of this Praja Mandal.

Many of the demands of the hill states centred around the agrarian problems. Gandhi and other Congress leaders guided the Praja Mandals and the All-India States People's Conference to involve the masses in the struggle for the removal of economic problems and the establishment of a responsible government. Congress helped the Praja Mandals to widen the base of the struggle by making people realize that their interests could be best protected by themselves. Though the Congress never directly intervened in the internal affairs of the Praja Mandals, it provided guidance as well as moral support to them and worked for negotiations between the princes and the Praja Mandals.

After the Dhami incidence, another incidence that completely changed the outlook of the people from obedience to command, was the famous 'Seven Days Satyagraha'. The news was headlined on the editorial page of The Tribune, February 6,

1948 as 'The Seven Days that Shook the Himalayas.' The movement was led by the workers of the Praja Mandals. They demanded the merger of the state of Suket with the Union of India. The ruler of the State of Suket was issued an ultimatum of forty eight hours to merge Suket with the Union of India failing which a Satyagraha would be launched to achieve this end. Getting no response from the ruler one thousand Satyagrahis under the leadership of Pandit Padam Dev marched into Suket's territory. As the Satyagrahis advances, hundreds of local people joined them. They captured the headquarter without any resistance. Later on the administration was taken over by the Government of India. ²⁰ Shivanand Ramual, of Sirmur, Sadanand Chandel of Bilaspur, Mukandlal of Suket and Padam Dev of Bushahar were some of the most famous personalities associated with this movement.

What the comparatively backward and resourceless people of the State of Suket had done just in seven days in exposing the exploitative social order was to become a great source of inspiration for the people of Himachal Pradesh in their struggle against feudalism.

20. The Tribune, March 7, 1948, (Chandigarh.)

With respect to political awakening the people of lower regions of Himachal Pradesh, viz., Kangra, Una, Hamirpur, Bilaspur and the lower reaches of Chamba and Mandi districts were more conscious than the people from the high ranges such as Kulu, Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti, Sirmur, Solan, Shimla and high ranges of Chamba and Mandi. This is because the people of lower reaches had direct link with the Britishers who settled in the lower areas of Dharmshala and Dalhousi. A number of educational institutions were set up by the Britishers. These educational institutions helped the emergence of an educated elite which fully participated in the national movement. The participation of the people of Kangra in the Indian National Army was another factor that contributed to this relatively higher level of political consciousness.

In 1939 a session of All-Indian People's States Conference was held at Ludhiana. In this session it was decided to form Praja Mandals in the hill states and to devote special attention towards these areas. This initiative resulted in the growth of general awareness among the hill people of Chamba, Mandi, Bilaspur, Bushahar, Jubbal, Sirmur and several other states. Units of Praja Mandals were organized under the leadership of different personalities like Padam Dev, Shivanand Ramual, Purna Anand and Satya Dev Bushahri.

The foremost demand of these Praja Mandals was the abolition of begar and Rahkar for which Praja Mandals started the movement called 'Bhai-Do-Na-Pai.'²¹ The people of the hills were asked not to pay any tax and to refuse recruitment to the British Army under the influence of local ruler. This was the first step in the fight against the colonial power and feudal lords together.

Praja Mandals under the stewardship of Y.S.Parmar urged the All-India Congress Committee to form Congress Committees in the hill region so that further steps for the separate identity of Himachal Pradesh could be taken. It was argued that the people inhabiting these hills have a common culture, language and custom and are different from the people of Punjab. There was a scheme to amalgamate them with the East Punjab but the majority of the people were against it. Taking into consideration the different features of the region, viz., its difficult topography, economic backwardness, difference of attitude of these people from those living in plains, the Government of India agreed to make it a small

21. Neither to give brothers to the British Army under the influence of the Raja nor to pay any tax.

province called Himachal Pradesh which would be administered by the Union Government.²²

Since the people of Himachal Pradesh had little in common with East Punjab, it was decided that for its political organization the province required a separate Provincial Committee. The All-India Congress Committee was requested to treat Praja Mandals as Congress Committees and to accept Praja Mandal workers as Congress members on signing the pledge. It was decided that the Congress Organization, the Praja Mandals, be recognized as Congress Committees. Dr. Y.S. Parmar was elected as the Chairman of the Committee, i.e., Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee in 1948. He was given authority to nominate other office bearers. Though several representations had been made against the nominations, the All-India Congress Committee upheld the decisions taken by the Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee. This decision was taken by the Congress Working Committee. The decision was taken to consider the Praja Mandals as the Congress Sub-committees.

22. Sharma, Ranbir, op.cit., p. 71.

When the hill region was declared as Chief Commissioner's Province under N.C.Mehta as the first Chief Commissioner by a merger of 31 hill states on April 15, 1948 all the workers of Praja Mandals merged themselves with the Congress. Consequently, the Congress constituted its state-level unit for the first time in this Himalayan region. As Professor C.P. Bhambhri says, the Congress in Himachal Pradesh has been founded on the infrastructure supplied by the Praja Mandals and therefore it began its career with certain initial difficulties. ²³

As compared to the former British areas of Kangra, Kulu and Shimla where the Congress Party had participated directly in the national struggle and in the process developed party organization co-terminus with the politico-geographical frontiers, in the erstwhile Princely areas of Himachal Pradesh.

The sudden expansion in adult franchise, which was in sharp contrast to the development in the British ruled States where the extension of franchise was a gradual phenomenon, quickened the development of political parties in Himachal

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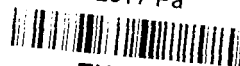


23. Bhambhri, C.P., Political Parties and State Politics in Iqbal Narain, ed., State Politics in India, New Delhi, 1976, p. 375.

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Pradesh. The relatively underdeveloped party system had to cope with the enormous increase in mass participation. Political parties were called upon to perform a crucial role in a traditional society undergoing rapid transformation.

The leaders of Praja Mandals who joined the Congress Party were Padam Dev, Daulat Ram Sankhyam, Dr. Y.S.Parmar, etc. All leaders came from the upper stratum of the hill society who led the Praja Mandals in the national movement.²⁴ They subsequently became prominent Congress leaders at the State level. Thus the Congress was strengthened by its association and identification with the Praja Mandal movements which popularly helped the party to represent popular interests. This accounts for the dominance of the Congress Party in the State Assembly for several decades. But the feudal elements retained their influence in the party machinery. There was very little representation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. in the first decade of responsible government in Himachal Pradesh. With the emergence of democratic institutions in Himachal Pradesh the feudal lords had no

24. Sharma, Ranbir, "Requirements and Shifts of a Democratic leadership - A Case Study of Himachal Pradesh", Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. 35, Nos. 3-4, Jaipur, 1974, p.258.

alternative but to join the Congress Party to remain in power.

The Congress Party emerged in the state largely on the grounds provided by the Praja Mandals and this made its position very strong in the region. The changes in land tenure, establishment of new pattern of local government, the expansion of developmental administration brought further changes in the relationship between social groups and the institutional structure. Particularly important was the Congress demand for statehood of Himachal Pradesh with continued struggle which enabled the Congress to enlarge its domains of support.

The Congress Party had drawn its major support from the rural areas, especially the agriculturists, horticulturists were its leading supporters. Rajputs who generally shied away from participation in the Praja Mandals and freedom movement in these areas flocked to the Congress. Dr. Y.S. Parmar, a Rajput leader of the Congress, boosted their support as they recognized that their interests were safe in the hands of a leader drawn from their community. He became a popular leader of Himachal Pradesh, and this is

evident from the slogans at the Himachal Day held in Shimla on 15th April, 1967 - 'Himachal Ka Gandhi - Dr. Y.S. Parmar.'²⁵ This provided the Rajputs a psychological boost so that the loss of political and economic power they could regain some influence in the politics of new democratic framework through their leader.

Bhartiya Janata Party emerged in the State as the Bhartiya Jana Sangh which merged with the Janata Party in 1977 and later because of the clash of interests within the Janata Party, pro-Rashtriya Swaymsevaka Sangh (RSS) candidates remained under the leadership of Shanta Kumar while others shifted either to Congress or Lok Dal or Janata Party. This party was formed in the state on the strength of the RSS workers on May 27, 1951 at a regional level conference held at Jalandhar. Since this party in the beginning did not believe in the separate entity of Himachal Pradesh and stood for its merger with Punjab in order to form a 'Maha Punjab'²⁶ it was not very popular. The main argument for merging of

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25. Tyagi, A.R., "General Elections in Himachal Pradesh - A case study of Feudal Politics", Political Science Review, Vol. 6, No. 3-4, Jaipur, 1968, p.222.
26. It included Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and some parts of Jammu and Kashmir.

Himachal Pradesh with Punjab was the inclusion of more Hindus in Punjab in order to reduce the Sikhs to a minority and to make India a unitary form of government.²⁷ The party drew support from the middle class peasantry, baniyas and several employees. Its strongholds are the areas like Kangra, Una, Hamirpur, Bilaspur, Chamba and Mandi. In the near future it might have good political say since 98.2% of the people of the state are Hindus who may be mobilized on the grounds of the Hindu interests. The leaders of the party like Shanta Kumar, Kishori Lal, Srawan Kumar and Jagdev belonged to the towns and remained supporters and leaders of the RSS. Thus the party leadership was urban-elite based.

The two Communist Parties, - viz., the Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPM), were important though their electoral influence was limited. But it is to be noted that among the peasants, labourers,

27. This is based on my talks with some important Bhartiya Janata Party personalities.

students and employees. There is an expansion of Communists' influence with the increasing rate of literacy and political awareness. The development of the CPI can be traced to the political conference organised by the Kisan Sabha at Bhangrotu, Mandi in April 1951.

Besides these three major political parties, there were a few other parties on the political scene which could not stand at par with the Congress. Some of these parties like Scheduled Caste Federation, Praja Socialist Party, Hindu Mahasabha, Lok Raj Party, Swatantra Party and Republican Party joined either the Congress or the BJP or the Communists or withered away. Since these political parties had no broad-base among the masses and stood for a some narrow interests of particular classes, they could not exist for long.

To conclude this chapter we can say that though a number of political parties have emerged over the years, none of them have been able to stand upto the image and resources of Congress. Though there was the Janata experiment of 1977-80, but that party too had splintered away in 1980. Since then a number of parties have been founded and then quietly gone into oblivion. But the latest trends seem to show another shift

away from Congress. In the last general elections, 1989, the Bhartiya Janata Party won three out of four Parliamentary seats in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

CHAPTER - 2

STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY : ACHIEVEMENT OF STATEHOOD

The dispersion of the Princely States geographically is one of the factors that ^{led to} the political consciousness of the people of the Himachal Pradesh. The foundations for an all-round development in Himachal Pradesh is dependent on the expression of a collective identity. This was materialised at the beginning of the twentieth century due to many factors enlisted below.

With the escalation in the public demand the personal rule of Rajas and Ranas in Himachal Pradesh came to an end on 15th April, 1948¹. The climination of centuries-old Princely autocracies constituted a victory for the people of Himachal Pradesh not only because it removed a tradition which was as old as the State's history itself, but because it reflected an urge for the establishment of democratic government. Therefore it could be described as a transformation of the society as a whole from tradition to modernity. In the process of this change, the people of hill society were politicised and they realised the democratic values for which they were struggling constantly, till they achieved their goal of a separate full fledged state.

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1. The end of 1940s witnessed a number of popular movements for the establishment of responsible governments under the auspices of the All India States' People Conference (AISPC) which led to the peaceful accession to the Indian Union of Many Princely States. See Menon, V.P., Story of the Integration of the Indian States, Orient Longman, 1956, Bombay and Urmila, Towards the Indegration of the Indian States. 1947, Asia Publishing House, 1968, Bombay.

In the beginning of the formation of a new state of Himachal Pradesh, the territories of the twenty one Shimla Hill States were first integrated into a single centrally administered unit known as Himachal Pradesh and it was given the status of Chief Commissioner's Province with N.C.Mehta as the first Chief Commissioner of Himachal Pradesh. The integration of small hill states into one democratic unit generated new hopes in the people of the hills to change their political destiny. In their struggle they had to experiment with new political forms and they had to pass through various stages of constitutional movements.

The agreement signed by the Government of India with the rulers of Shimla Hill States enshrined such a will of the Union Government to keep these Hill states under Central Control. It stipulated that:

"Whereas it is the intention of the Government of India to unite and integrate the territories of the East Punjab Hill States in one centrally administered Unit, and to provide as soon as possible and subject to the provisions to the constitution of India, for its administration through a Lieutenant Governor, with an Advisory Council consisting of three rulers of the East Punjab Hill States and a local legislator with such constitution, functions and powers as the Government of India may from time to time specify.²

2. See Charak S.S. History and Culture of the Himalayan States, Vol.II, Dep. of Language and Culture, H.P. New Delhi. p.295, 1979.

According to this agreement the future political development of Himachal Pradesh was rather vague. It was decided and determined by the Government of India, in accordance with its own appreciation of the situation, that the aspirations of the people would be considered and that a small measure of self government was to be introduced. Probably the Central Government had certain apprehensions about the feasibility of a separate state for Himachal which accounts for the vagueness of the covenant. For this reason Himachal was not given full autonomy or separate status. But the struggle for its own identity was carried out by the people of Himachal Pradesh. A sudden change from an autocratic rule to a democratic set up, especially in the context of an appallingly low level of literacy, political consciousness and the under-developed nature of economy, involved an element of uncertainty which the Government of India did not perhaps want to take.

An additional cause for keeping the region of Himachal Pradesh under Central Control was due to its strategic position. It is situated on the border of China (Tibet). There were tensions with this country after 1962.

Since 1958 the people of the hill states of Punjab harboured a feeling of neglect and discrimination. They felt it would be better for them to merge with Himachal Pradesh. The hill people had always nursed a grudge against plainsmen for their exploitation and humiliation³ as such there has always been an undercurrent of desire to free themselves from the economic exploitation by plainsmen of Punjab, an urge to restore their self respect and autonomy. Ranbir Sharma has laid much emphasis on the unique cultural current of the Himachal people which gave rise to a separate identity of the hill people of Himachal Pradesh.⁴ Their culture is different from the people of Punjab in terms of language, customs and traditions and attitude. Because of their cultural homogeneity, language and cultural traits an urge for a separate state. People had common social customs and traditions and geographical homogeneity. Having common social conditions, the people of this region were anxious to merge themselves with each other and form a new state called Himachal Pradesh as they were feeling discriminated by the

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3. Most of the business centres in Himachal Pradesh were dominated by the Punjabis such as Shimla, Mandi, Dharamshala, Kulu, and Chamba etc. Consequently they become the traders and shopkeepers keeping the Hill people as buyers only. They were often referred as 'Paharis' in very derogatory terms.
 4. See Ranbir Sharma, "The Politics of Statehood - A Search for Identity", Political Science Review, Vol. 14 Nos. 3-4, 1975, Jaipur, p. 78.

by the Punjab Government. They complained that they were not given adequate representation in the state administration, nor was adequate attention given towards their development which required greater public investment in this hill region. The people of these hill states believed that their problems would be solved by merging with Himachal Pradesh.

In 1965 the Akalis raised the demand for the formation of a Punjabi Suba. A Parliamentary Committee headed by the speaker Hukam Singh was formed in 1965 to look into the problems. The Committee submitted its report in the favour of establishing a Punjabi Suba and this demand was conceded in March, 1966. A boundary commission was appointed to adjust the boundaries of the proposed state.⁵

The Akalis wanted the hill areas to be kept out of the Punjabi Suba because their inclusion would mean an addition of over one million Hindu population to the proposed Punjabi Suba. This would reduce the Sikh Community to a

5. For details see Ranbir Sharma, Himachal - Past Present and Future Himachal Pradesh University Department of Correspondence Courses, Shimla, 1975, p.123.

minority in the new state. Except for Bhartiya Jan Sangh, every other political party supported the proposal of merger of Kangra, Una, Kulu, Lahul and Spiti and Shimla with the Himachal Pradesh. The reason why Bhartiya Jan Sangh was opposed to separate existence of Himachal Pradesh was its support to the formation of Maha Punjab in which it wanted the inclusion of the whole of Himachal and Haryana. This would reduce the Sikhs to a minority in Punjab and in this way Hindu dominance could be maintained in the state of Punjab.⁶

The States Reorganisation Commission of 1956 had decided to merge Himachal Pradesh with the neighbouring state of Punjab.⁷ The leaders of Himachal Pradesh, however vehemently opposed the merger with Punjab and agreed to retain Himachal as a separate entity in the form of a Union Territory under the Territorial Council. Before this the territorial possessions had expanded when on July 1, 1954 the part 'C' state of Bilaspur was merged with Himachal Pradesh.⁸

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6. The Bhartiya Jan Sangh emerged in H.P. on the grounds provided by RSS and thus wanted to maintain Hindu dominance in Punjab.
 7. Sharma, Ranbir, *op.cit.*, p.390.
 8. *ibid.*, see also, Govardhan Singh, History of Himachal Pradesh, Yudbodh Pub.House, Delhi.

The period from 1957 to 1963 delayed the constitutional and political development of Himachal Pradesh. The Territorial Council was a corporate body, subject to numerous limitations. It was under the overall control of the Central Government, acting through the administration who had powers to give directions to the Territorial Council. It was based on the principle of 'transferred subjects' which were the departments of health, education and public works. This system comprised a kind of dual government in which the state's position was quite weak. At best it was 'glorified local body' which had a grandiose appearance but no real powers. The Territorial Council system was condemned by the people as retrograde since they were demanding the status of full fledged state for Himachal.

This situation was rectified to some extent when Parliament passed the constitution 24th Amendment Act which provided the Union Territory of Himachal Pradesh with a popularly elected Vidhan Sabha and a Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers was sworn in on 1st July 1956, it was headed by ⁹ Yashwant Singh Parmar as the Chief Minister.

9. Ibid.

After the reorganisation of Punjab which took place in 1966, the following areas were transferred to Himachal Pradesh thus strengthening the demand of the people already inhabiting the hills, for a full-fledged state of Himachal Pradesh :

1. Districts of Kangra, Kullu, Lahul & Spiti and Shimla.
2. The Quango circle of Lohara, Amb, Una and Santokhgarh of Hoshiarpur district.
3. Dhar Kalam Quango circle of Pathankot tehsil¹⁰ of Gurdaspur district.

The demand for statehood received a fresh impetus with the inclusion of Punjab Hill states into Himachal Pradesh. A broad - based ministry with all shades of opinion was formed in July 1967, several members of the newly merged areas were inducted in the Ministry under the leadership of Yashwant Singh Parmar.

Himachal embarked on yet another round of campaign for statehood. The campaign started on 24 July, 1968 when the

10. ibid., pp.126-127, Also see, Govardhan Singh, History of Himachal Pradesh, Yugbodh Pub. House, Delhi, 1982, p.205 and Ahluwalia, M.S., History of Himachal Pradesh, Intellectual Pub. House, New Delhi, 1988, p.9.

Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a resolution demanding statehood. A Negotiating Committee headed by Tapandar Singh was appointed to take up the issue with the Congress high command at the Centre. This resolution which was passed on 24th July, 1968 stated:

This House earnestly feels that it is high time for Himachal Pradesh to be recognised as a full fledged state and to that end, it strongly urges that the Central leadership and the Union Government concede the demand of the Pradesh for statehood by bringing about the necessary legislation without further loss of time.¹¹

First of all its backwardness, then its small area and finally its strategic importance led the Central Government to keep it under Central control. But as the democratic consciousness developed and especially the impression gained ground that the Central government rule was in no way better than local rule, the demand for statehood became progressively more strident. As a result of a series of concessions to its repeated demands, Himachal was already possessing a separate political entity with a legislature and a Lieutenant Governor to oversee its functioning on behalf of the Central Government.

But Himachalis contention was that this arrangement gave them not the grain of democracy, but only the chaff. For the

11. *ibid.*

Ministry and legislature were subject to the long distance fiat of bureaucrats of the Union Home Ministry in Delhi. These complaints formed the basis of the argument for a separate state. Politicians in the state including Yashwant Singh Parmar the Chief Minister repeatedly stressed how they were constrained in trying to meet the aspirations of the people. Though they were the representatives of the people, it was the Centre which had the 'veto power' overall that they planned to do. Under these instructions most bills before coming to the legislature of Himachal Pradesh were scrutinised by the officials in Delhi.¹² This adversely affected policies such as land reforms in Himachal Pradesh whose importance and complexity, people from Himachal could understand. But officials in Delhi went about scrutinising such bills submitted by the State Government, and raising objections and making changes. In the process the democratic machinery, slow by nature, was slowed further in Himachal Pradesh. This was unjust to the people who had consistently fought for the status of full-fledged statehood on democratic grounds.

Different socio-economic factors also contributed to the persistent demand of Himachal For a full fledged state.

12. Manohar Suri, Free Press Journal, (Bombay) Aug. 10, 1970.

While discussing various aspects emphasis must be laid on the economic potential of the region which was not properly utilised. This included the vast hydroelectric power potential of 13000 megawatts abundant forest wealth, great opportunities for setting up of traditional as well as non-traditional industries, possibilities of developing horticulture, sericulture, sheep breeding and rearing and fisheries. If these resources were fully harnessed the region had the potentiality of becoming one of the most prosperous states of India.

But the economic resources of the area were not adequately harnessed. Therefore, it had very little agricultural & industrial production and had to face food crises with the merger of Punjab hill states as around 1 million people were added to Himachal causing an acute shortage of food. The Punjab Government under the rule of the then Chief Minister Gurnam Singh stopped food supply to Himachal Pradesh which caused panic in the hill region. The requirement of Himachal Pradesh was 12,000 tonnes of food grains at that time while it had no hoarded stocks. Chief Minister Yashwant Singh Parmar with the help of food Minister Hari Ram of Himachal Pradesh made efforts to persuade the Chief Minister of Punjab to release stocks of 1000 tonnes¹³ of foodgrains.

13. The Hindu, (Madras), 1967.

Following the decision of the Chief Minister favouring the formation of a single state Food Zones, the Punjab Government imposed a severe blockade on the movement of foodgrains to Himachal and other neighbouring states, which suddenly created an acute scarcity of food in large parts of Himachal.

Thus the people of the hills suffered from serious economic problems and exploitation at the hands of Punjab inspite of great potentiality of production. This further strengthened their demand for statehood the aspirations and concerns of the prople were reflected in Lieutenant Governer, Bahadur Singh's in-augural address to the Assembly Budget Session :

Further delay in conceding the eargrly sought statehood status will be a cause of frustration which, the Centre would do well to avoid. Besides a delayed gesture a response to such a unanimous demand would lose much of the grace. An All Party Committee is already pushing the issue with Union Government and progressive people throughout the country will share the Lt. Governer's hope that our endeavours would be crowned with success.¹⁴

Yashwant Singh Parmer highlighted the distinctness of the Pahari language declaring on the Himachal Day on 15th April,

14. The Tribune (Ambala) March 6, 1968.

1963 that Himachal is a Pahari speaking region. He demanded that Pahari should be the state language written in Devnagari script. As happened in case of Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and some other states of India, Himachal should be granted full statehood on a linguistic basis. Of course, Pahari was not adopted as the official language because it has no script of its own and since Himachal is geographically a very heterogenous region, the Pahari language has various dialects in different regions like Kullavi in Kullu, Dogri and Chambiali in Chamba, Mahasavi in Mahasu, Solan and Kangri in Kangra. Nevertheless, it was given the status of a second language in Himachal Pradesh after Hindi.

Despite all these claims Union Government was not willing to declare it as full-fledged state, and it was felt that Himachal was not an economically viable territory. Declaring it as a full-fledged state would lead to the creation of new problems for the Centre. These arguments did not deter the people and the Government of Himachal Pradesh from campaigning for a separate state that would be financially viable and would marshall all its internal resources to strengthen its

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15. Language spoken by the hill people which is not recognised as the national language by our constitution, but it has got status of second language in Himachal Pradesh after Hindi.

claim for statehood. According to the supporters of separate state taxation measures would yield revenue more than a crore rupees, which would not only meet the establishment expenses of the Union Territory, but also leave surplus of over Rs. 50 lakhs during the current year, 1969.¹⁶

The plan provisions met by the Centre for 1967-68 Rs. 15.78 crore and 1968-69 Rs. 19.50 crore¹⁷ were inadequate to meet the growing needs of the people. While for other states such provisions had been increased sharply from year to year, the allocation for Himachal had been decreased, indicating a lack of appreciation in New Delhi of the vast problems of development of the hill region. The developmental potential was the major factor for the demand of statehood by the people of Himachal Pradesh. According to Himachalis, no state in the country except Maharashtra was meeting its non-plan expenditure from its own resources. All states were provided grants from the Centre to meet their expenditure. After raising the status of Himachal Pradesh from Union Territory to a full fledged state, Himachal would not be a surplus state in the Union on the non-plan expenditure side. The non-plan

16. Patriot, (New Delhi) April 22, 1968.

17. The Hindustan Times, (Delhi) April 17, 1968.

expenditure of Himachal Pradesh in 1969 was Rs. 31.72 crore. After it is made a full state it will get statutory grants, shares in central taxes and duties, income from power projects and share in water levy amounting to nearly Rs. 36.64 crore - leaving a surplus of over Rs. 5 crore annually. This surplus money could be spent on other developmental works in the state like road construction and provision of water supply to the people.

But the state Government was debarred from changing the structure of the taxation system; it could change the taxes only within certain limits. If it wanted to introduce a new tax or withdraw an old one, it had to recast its existing tax structure to change its incidence to any appreciable extent, it had to submit the proposals not only for administrative sanction in Delhi but for financial sanction too.¹⁸ On the expenditure side, no scheme costing more than Rs. 25 lakhs could be introduced without the prior sanction of the Central Government. In short, the Himachal Pradesh Government contended, it was bound hand and foot to the Centre.

Yashwant Singh Parmar and Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee Chief Satyavati Sang met with the Prime Minister

18. Manohar Suri, op.cit.

Indira Gandhi and expressed the feelings of the people who were upset over the fact that Himachal which had larger area than Punjab and Haryana was a Union Territory. Further, the electorate for the Assembly had increased from 330000 to 470000 and the population from 13.15 lakhs people to 28 lakhs. Therefore the representation should also be increased. 19

The Central Government put forward the argument that Himachal was not an economically viable region. Against an annual revenue of Rs. 14 crore its expenditure on maintaining its establishment alone come to Rs. 19 crore. The gap was filled by Central grant of about Rs. 5 crore. ²⁰ How would Himachal balance its budget without burdening its population unduly. For when it would become a full state the centre would be under no obligation to provide this special subvention. While the people's representatives put forth the argument of its vastness of its natural resources and small population, as which could be looked after by the proper exploitation of its natural wealth.

Himachal Pradesh's claim for statehood was based not only on commitments of its leaders but its own enlarged size, financial

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19. Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Himachal Pradesh, Development Profile of Himachal Pradesh, Simla.
20. Manohar Suri, op.cit.

viability and developmental needs and by considering the claim the Union Government conceded the idea of its demand of statehood for which it fully deserved.

Majority of the members of the Parliament backed fully the idea of statehood for Himachal Pradesh. There was considerable support in the Lok Sabha of the demand for full fledged state before the House passed the Constitution Eighteenth Amendment Bill. The Bill was passed to make amendments in article 3 of the constitution for the reorganisation of Punjab on linguistic basis and to add some parts of Punjab with Himachal Pradesh and to make Chandigarh a Union Territory. Vir Bhadar Singh, Member of Parliament from Himachal asked the Centre to explain its attitude on the future of Union Territories, so that political uncertainties facing the people ended and they enjoyed equal status alongwith the citizens in the country. A few independent members of Parliament supported the idea of merger of Kashmir with Himachal in order to make the region more composite and to strengthen the border areas of India. ²¹ M.P's from Himachal demanded more representation for the hill areas as the representation given to them as Union Territory was inadequate. In their view, owing to its hilly terrain, scattered population and lack of communication and transportation, the

21. The Hindustan Times, (New Delhi), Aug.11,1966.

criteria applicable to other states can not be applied to Himachal Pradesh. It should continue to have weightage in the State Assembly as well as in the Parliament. The signatories of the representation were, C.L. Verma, S.N. Ramazoul, Anand Chand, Vir Bhadra Singh and Lalit Sen.²²

All the political parties of Himachal Pradesh had forged a genuine United Front for the achievement of this cherished goal. The campaign had been organised by an All Parties Statehood Committee, led by the Chief Minister Yashwant Singh Parmar. All political parties were unanimous in their demand for statehood and they worked unitedly for it. An opposition leader went one step further suggesting that a time frame should be fixed for achieving the goal of statehood. If Himachal was not granted statehood by that time, all elected members of the Assembly should resign.

However the Bhartiya Jan Sangh did not stand for the separate entity of Himachal Pradesh and supported the idea of merger of Himachal with Punjab to maintain Hindu dominance there, when the people of the hills were successful in achieving the target of 'Vishal Himachal' by merging of Punjab Hill State²³

22. Indian Express, (New Delhi), Aug.29,1966.

23. When the size of Himachal Pradesh was enlarged by merging of Punjab hill areas with Himachal Pradesh, some people called it 'Vishal Himachal' means larger Himachal.

with Himachal on Nov.1,1966, the Bhartiya Jan Sangh endorsed to the aspirations of the people by supporting the demand of statehood.

The most important role was played by the then Chief Minister Yashwant Singh Parmar. Parmar mounted a well organised campaign that proceeded in stages and saw to it that agitational methods were assiduously eschewed. Parmar's argument had carried more weight at the Centre because he belonged to the party of Indira Gandhi and all others who had supported her contended that he too was anxious to redeem congress promises and to give a new deal to the people. Chief Minister Yashwant Singh Parmar was vigorously campaigning for the achievement of statehood and in later years was not closely identified with his state as its creator and sustainer that he should go down in history as 'Mr. Himachal'.²⁴

Taking into consideration various factors, the Government of India, finally declared Himachal Pradesh as a full state making it the 18th state of the Union on 25th January 1971. Himachalis, campaign for this cause was conducted on Constitutional lines and thus did not create any law and order problem. Such claims in other parts of India were often marked by violent

24. The Tribune (Chandigarh), May 4, 1981.

agitational methods such as in Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. This is perhaps the sole example of major political objective, having been accomplished purely by planned campaigning strictly under constitutional methods.

Himachal Pradesh had been changed since Sardar Patel made the statement in 1948 that :

in the final shape, after this area is sufficiently developed in its resources and administration, it is proposed that its Constitution should be similar to that of any Province.²⁵

Right from the beginning Himachal Pradesh had been trying to get recognition for its distinct personality, and it was rather odd that a territory larger than Kerala, Nagaland, Punjab and Haryana has all these years been denied the status of statehood.

25. National Herald (New Delhi) Aug.2,1970.

CHAPTER - 3

CONGRESS PARTY DOMINANCE IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

The Congress Party has been the dominant party in Himachal Pradesh since 1948. The performance of the Congress Party in Himachal Pradesh, given in Table - 1, reveals the dominance of the Congress Party for about four decades, excepting for a short period from 1977-1980 when the Janata Party came to power. Congress returned to power in 1980 when some MLAs¹ of the Janata Party defeated the Congress Party resulting in an increase in its strength in the Legislative Assembly to 38 out of a total strength of 68, thus giving the Congress Party a majority in the Legislative Assembly. The position of the Congress Party in the Legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha is given in the Tables - 4,5,6,7 and 8.

The Congress Party maintained its primacy owing to the continuous support it secured from various sections of the hill society. The main support for this party came from the big landlords - the Thakur, Ranas and Zamindars, - who entered politics in order to retain power. They in turn mobilized the support of the masses who were their subjects in their erstwhile states. These landlords became the leaders of the masses in the state by joining the Congress Party. In this process the

1. See Ranbir Sharma, "Politics of Himachal Pradesh" in T.R.Sharma(ed), New Challenges in Indian Politics, 1986, Delhi, p.229.

power of these feudal lords was legitimized albeit, in a different form. In the pre-independence period, they were the ruling class; after independence their power was legitimized by the people through the new system itself. The people, who had been obeying the orders of their Maliks² for centuries, now started working under the directions of their past rulers. These landlords were now in the Congress Party and drew considerable power from their subjects.

The populist i.e., the pro-poor image of the Congress Party helped the Party to gain the support of the weaker sections of the society such as Halis, Kolis, Domer, Chamars, Girth etc. They were averse to the idea of an alternative to the Congress because they found that their interests were safe in the hands of the Congress leaders. This can be seen when the Congress Party's General Secretary called upon the workers not to ignore the weaker sections of the society as they were the main strength of the Congress.³ Thus it is not surprising that the Congress Party has been recognised by the poorer sections as the only party which worked for their welfare. Its image

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2. The term 'Malik', in the local dialect, means Master- i.e. the one who owns ~~the party~~ and looks after the various activities of his subjects.
 3. See, The Tribune (Chandigarh), 25 Dec., 1974.

as a secular national party also helped the party to maintain its dominance in the state politics. The policy of reservation for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) (who together form about 15.2% of the total population of Himachal Pradesh) in various governmental departments was another important factor that helped the party to mobilise the support of the backward classes. The SC & ST regarded the Congress as the only Party which supported their interests and promoted their representation in the legislative assemblies and the Parliament and government services. This helped them to gain entry into the educational institutions and provided them opportunities for economic advancement. All this helped them to gain a measure of dignity after centuries of oppression and injustice. Many among the SC & ST were beholden to the Congress for extending equal treatment to them. The way the Congress workers treat the lower-caste people can well be illustrated by the comment of a Scheduled Caste person from Sihinta in Chamba District:

The Congress people come and eat with us in our homes whereas others (like those who belong to the B.J.S) even don't like to shake hands with us.

In contrast to this attitude, other political parties were not always willing to provide representation to the lower castes

The major opposition party the B.J.S. was dominated by the Hindu high caste who did not interact with the depressed classes and were thus deprived of the SC & ST support.

The land distribution system played a very significant part in the determination of the political power. The extent of land tenancy is very high in the districts of Kangra, Hamirpur, Una and Bilaspur. Tenant-class was mobilized by the communists and the CPI secured two seats in the Legislative Assembly in 1967. However, because of the weak organisation and the split in the Party, the Communists lost support among the tenants. This can be seen in the fact that among the two communist parties, only CPI(M) could secure one seat in the 1972 elections. The tenant classes in this election seems to have shifted their support to the Congress Party when that Party promised to ameliorate the condition of tenants through legislation. Thus the Congress enjoyed the support of the upper classes as well as the tenants. The small landlords and the rich peasantry supported the B.J.S.

Politically and geographically, Himachal Pradesh can be divided into two regions - the horticultural and the

4. For details on the organisation and support structure of the B.J.S., see the fourth chapter.

agricultural regions. The horticultural region includes the districts of Simla, Solan, Kulu, Kinnour, Lahaul-Spiti and the upper reaches of Chamba and Mandi. The agricultural region, consisted mostly of the new areas merged with Himachal Pradesh in 1966, such as Kangra, Una, Hamirpur, Bilaspur and the lower reaches of Chamba and Mandi districts. Before the formation of Vishal Himachal.⁵ In 1966 there were no apple orchards in the upper region of the state, but however this part was already in Himachal Pradesh at the time of its emergence as a separate entity. That is the reason why it is known as Old Himachal. Popular Movements were led by Padam Dev, Bhagmal Southa and Yashwant Singh Parmar who were associated with the Congress Party. The linkage of the Congress Party with these leaders enabled the party to establish its presence in this region.

Kulu district, was merged with Himachal Pradesh in 1966. Because of similar socio-economic and geographical conditions the people of this district mixed with others in the Old Himachal region such as Simla, Solan, Kinnaur and Chamba. As a democratic set-up evolved, the people who were owing large tracts of land started growing potatoes and apples.

5. This was the term used by the people when some hill areas of Punjab were transferred to Himachal Pradesh in 1966 which resulted in the almost doubling of its territory and population.

The income from these crops was quite high. For instance, whereas in Punjab one acre of land growing wheat yields an income of Rs. 400, that figure in Himachal Pradesh for apples⁶ is about Rs.14,000, i.e., 35 times more than that of Punjab. However, the horticulturists of Himachal Pradesh required certain infrastructural facilities like transportation and communications, markets, seed potatoes, pesticides, fertilizers and so on. These can be obtained only through an access to the government. Hence we see the emergence of pressure groups such as Fruit Grower's Association, Himachal Pradesh Cooperative Marketing and Development Federation and State Cooperative Union.⁷ These associations were established by the people of the upper regions which gradually became powerful lobbies in the state politics. The apple and potato growers have strengthened their influence by controlling various semi-governmental agencies which have been created to supply inputs and supporting services to the rural population. Besides all the Chief Ministers, excepting Shanta Kumar (1977-1980), belonged to this region. Much of the support of the Congress Party to draw from the rich apple and potato growing classes of Himachal Pradesh.

6. See T.R. Sharma (ed) New Challenges in Indian Politics, New Delhi, 1986, p.272.

7. *ibid.*

Caste also played an important role in the electoral politics of the state. As the three Chief Ministers of the upper regions namely Yashwant Singh Parmar, Thakur Ram Lal and Vir Bhadra Singh belonged to the Rajput caste which is the most influential and the dominant caste. The Rajputs supported the Congress in the belief that their interests would be safeguarded by that party.

The politics of the Congress Party is the monopoly of men which again is a reflection of the persisting overall feudal orientation in the region. The female legislators, such as Asha Kumari (MLA of Chamba), Vidya Stokes (who became the Speaker of the Vidhan Sabha), Chandresh Kumari (M.P of Kangra) and Shyama Sharma (MLA from Bhilaspur) belonged to the former ruling families indicating the influence of the erstwhile princely classes.

At the time of the first general elections only the Congress Party had a strong organisation which led to the securing of two seats without even a contest.

However the period before the elections of 1967 was the period of political turmoil as the people were struggling

8. See A.R. Tyagi, "General Elections in Himachal Pradesh: A Case Study of Feudal Politics" Political Science Review (Jairur) Vol. 6, nos.3-4, 1968, p.225.

to achieve statehood for Himachal Pradesh. By the time of the fourth general elections Himachal was a full-fledged state. This put an end to the uncertainty that engulfed various regions of Himachal which were scattered in Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. The mountainous regions of the North-West Himalayas which were until then spread across Punjab and Himachal Pradesh were integrated into a single state in Nov. 1966.

The election campaign of 1967 and 1971 brought one fact into sharp focus namely that the party performance or the public issues were completely ignored while personal, feudal and caste influences were fully exploited. In most of the Constituencies, the Thakurs and Ranas retained their seats.

The Congress Party had a well-oiled machinery of mobilising the people. The President of the Congress Party stressed direct contacts of the party workers with the masses. Much emphasis was laid on building contacts with the rural masses who were the real strength of the Congress and thus should not be ignored. Proper link between the office bearers and of party members of the Assembly and the Ministry were sought to be established as this would help the party to meet the challenges posed by different forces particularly the movement led by JayaPrakash Narain. The Congress by way of raising issues like the provision &

9. See The Tribune (Chandigarh), 25 Dec., 1974.

of water supply, electricity employment facilities, the reduction in the prices of commodities, etc. touched on the sentiments of the specific segments of the hill society including to lower stata, minorities and other groups. However, local issues were also raised in the assembly elections. For electioneering excepting the local vernacular papers. There were no newspaper or periodicals with a wide circulation in the state. Propaganda work involved the projection of the images of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, personal contacts not so much directly with the electorate as through the local Thakurs, Ranas, orchardists, Mahajans and the newly created potents i.e. Sarpanches and the Pradhans. In the towns the contactmen of the candidates were the Villas and Kothis.¹⁰

The election mechanism is capable of reflecting, more or less accurately all the important shades of views currently prevailing in the country. However in a society traditionally different from normal democratic set-up but with a newly acquired desire, expressed. Mostly through its Constitutional, legal enactment to become a modern society. The political system was an amalgam of new forms and old values rather than a model of exclusively modern or traditional elements.

Inspite of the very substantial mass base of the party, the Congress suffered defeat in the 1977 elections at the hands

10. Villas and Kothis were local workers. For details see A.R. Tyagi, op.cit.

of the Janata Party. Various factors contributed in the defeat of the Congress Party. Most important factors contributing to the decline of this party were the blatant exploitation of the hill people by resort to authoritarian methods. Coercion and suppression which were selective in the past became more general and constant and were directed at large sections of society.¹¹ Regardless of the oppression of the sections of the rural masses, the government has not so far directly interfered with the domestic life of the ordinary people in a clearly political form as it did during the nineteen months of emergency. The oppressive nature of the family planning program and the attendant crimes uprooted the people from that daily routine and gave a severe jolt to their sense of dignity as human beings. The disgust, hatred and alienation of the common man was evident everywhere.¹² The key element was this attack on their dignity and self-respect. In other words the rural hill people found that the traditional pattern of sporadic violence perpetuated by landlords against them became a generalised pattern for the entire people through methods of direct intervention of the state under the guise of

11. Javeed Alam, Domination and Dissent : Peasants and Politics Mandira, Calcutta, 1985, p.14.

12. *ibid.*

the family planning programme. The twin effects of the Congress oppression was, firstly, the alienation of large sections of ruling classes from the own established political leadership; and, secondly, the loss of mass base of the political leaders. The two were interrelated in such a way as to transform the popular upsurge into new electoral verdict for the Janata Party.¹³ The aggressiveness of the family planning made the situation ripe for a revolt and the elections provided an opportunity to inflict a defeat on the Congress for the excesses committed by it during the emergency.

The sudden emergence of the Youth Congress as an independent force within the Congress created one more problem for the people. The overall assessment was that the Youth Congress reinforced and strengthened the hold of unscrupulous elements, which consisted of the politicians, bureaucrats and the local leaders who committed atrocities on the people, on the Congress party. People generally referred to the growth of this force in very derogatory terms - "bunch of idiots",¹⁴ "biggest disaster for the Congress" and so on.

Another reason for the Congress's defeat was the poor implementation of the Land Acquisition Acts of 1953 and 1972. The distribution of land was very inadequate and minimal. Even

13. ibid.

14. ibid., p.35

where the land reforms were implemented among the beneficiaries the influential Pradhans were prominent. For instance in Chopal, of Simla District, the Congress government distributed surplus lands not to the landless but to the owners of land.¹⁵

All these resulted in the defeat of the Congress securing only 9 seats in 1977 as against 53 in 1972 in the Legislative Assembly.¹⁶ It lost all the 4 seats for the Lok Sabha.¹⁷ But soon after the short political tenure of the Janata Party, the Congress was restored to power in 1980.¹⁸ This resulted in the Centre's increase of public investment and grants to Himachal Pradesh.

The way the 35 day long strike of the NGO, was handled by the CM. Ram Lal was praised by the Congress leadership which attributed this strike as a 'political conspiracy' by the B.J.P. whose object was to topple the Congress government.¹⁹

15. ibid.

16. See Tables - 5-6.

17. See Table-9.

18. See The Hindustan Times (Delhi) 4 April 1980.

19. See The Times of India (Delhi) 2 Nov.1980, For details on the NGO strike see Patriot (Delhi),16 Octo.1980.

Several steps have been indicated by the Congress government in recent years to expedite the development of the region and the implementation of public policies including land reforms. 'The Himachal Pradesh Village Common Lands Vesting and Utilisation Act of 1974'²⁰ was implemented which brought much relief to nearly 18,000 landless people. Under this²¹ the Shamlat have now been vested in the state government. Tenants were given some parts of the land they were cultivating previously. The landless people were provided with about 5 Bighas of land each. Thus these measures benefited about lakhs of people.

Concerning the weaker sections and the minorities, who were resisted by the upper caste in the implementation of the land reform measures,²² the Congress launched certain programmer like loans for the poor, employment generating assets, subsidies to establish cottage industries, and so on to ameliorate their condition of life .

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20. See The Tribune (Chandigarh) 31 August, 1975; Economic Times (Delhi) 1 Aug. 1975.
 21. Shamlat is the land which is not occupied by any one and which is under the control of the state.
 22. See National Herald (Delhi), 29 March 1978.

There have been some significant changes in the administration also. Ram Lal was replaced by Vir Bhadra Singh as the C.M. as the former was assured of selling of trees worth crores to the Timber Mafia.²³ There was also a purge in the party as well as in the bureaucracy of corrupt elements. This process of change was continued in the 1985 elections as most of the sitting MLAs were replaced by politicians who owed allegiance to Vir Bhadra Singh.²⁴ Personal rule was the form of leadership that had developed in the state politics. To curb corruption the Institution of the 'Lokayukta' (from whose purview the CM. was not exempted) was established; the 'Prevention of the Specific Corrupt Practices Act'²⁵ was passed, the enforcement and vigilance machinery of the government was activated. All these measures has had its impact on the public life of Himachal Pradesh and boosted the image of the Congress Party.

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23. See The Tribune (Chandigarh) 15 April, 1988.
24. Shiv Kumar, a Minister who was denied a ticket for the 1985 elections, was accused of corruption for nepotism, Similarly Vijay Singh Mankhotia was also denied a ticket.
25. see The Tribune (Chandigarh) 15 April, 1988.

Thus under the leadership of Vir Bhadra Singh, the Congress Party emerged as a well-knit, united and strong organisation. Vir Bhadra Singh's clean public image commanded the respect of the people though he was accused sometimes of functioning in an authoritative style.²⁶

26. See The Hindustan Times (Delhi, 5 June, 1982) and also The Tribune (Chandigarh) 13 April 1988.

CHAPTER - 4

GROWTH AND DECLINE OF JANATA PARTY IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

The authoritarian rule during the emergency filled the people with disgust and fear. They were anxious to overthrow the Congress Party and when Indira Gandhi called general elections in 1977 the people of India including those from Himachal took their chance to remove the Congress from power. The establishment of Janata Party offered a viable alternative to the Congress Party. The party came to power on the basis of massive mandate.

The Janata Party in Himachal Pradesh was dominated by the Jana Sangh and the RSS. The party consisted mainly of members belonging to the RSS which was an influential force in the state for many years. The RSS supported the Bhartiya Jan Sangh in 1953 as a result of a decision taken at the Ludhiana convention of RSS in 1953. In 1977 Bhartiya Jan Sangh joined the newly formed Janata Party to oust Congress.

In Himachal Pradesh the situation was quite different because as the major opposition party was the Bhartiya Jan Sangh which had the support of the RSS. The leaders of the party were staunch workers of the RSS. Important leaders of the party were Shanta Kumar, Kishori Lal and Kanwer Durga Chand.

To understand the mass support of the Janata Party we need to look at the regional factors which played a significant role in the party building. The Janata Party support was based mainly in the newly merged areas of Himachal Pradesh, i.e., Kangra, Una, Hamirpur, Kulu and other lower reaches of the state. No doubt, the Janata Party gained considerable support from the anti-Congress move in the 1977 elections from old Himachal. In the subsequent elections for the Lok Sabha and State Assembly almost all the old areas supported the Congress. Barring Shanta Kumar all the Chief Ministers since the formation of Himachal Pradesh have come from old Himachal. This has alienated the people of the new Himachal as they felt discriminated against by the people of the old Himachal. Dissatisfied with Punjab, the new areas came with high hopes to Himachal. But after the first flush of enthusiasm of their home coming they had a feeling of frustration and deprivation, apart from the anachronistic land laws and outmoded taxes and a chronic food shortage.

The integration of the hill areas of the Punjab with Himachal Pradesh has opened up great avenues for development in this region. If the rich agricultural, forest and hydel potential is harnessed properly the state can take a big leap forward. In fact, the merger of the districts of Kangra, Shimla, Kulu and Lahaul and Spiti on Nov. 1, 1966 has doubled the land revenue and brought forests worth

Rs. 400 crore, besides potentially rich Kangra valley in to the state.¹ The biggest advantage that the new areas have brought in is in the field of food production as the current deficit of 1967 was met by the centre and Punjab. The government which till then was paying its attention to horticultural development, had to now take up seriously the task of increasing food production. The merger area also brought to Himachal almost all the major tourist resorts in North West India namely Shimla, Kulu, Mandi, Dalhousi, Kasauli and Dharmsala.

Inspite of providing such large avenues for development the people of this region saw that their region had only 31 seats in the 60 member Legislative Assembly in which out of seven cabinet ministers and five deputy ministers only two ministers of cabinet rank and two deputy ministers were from newly merged areas after the 1967 elections.² Thus the main cause of dissatisfaction was political. The

1. See Kapil Verma, The Hindustan Times, (New Delhi) Feb. 22, 1968.

2. Ibid.

critics pointed out that the new areas had not been given an adequate share in political power without which their needs, they felt, could not be properly met. The imbalance had resulted because of the expansion of the ministry in 1968, all three incumbents were taken from the old areas. The people of the new areas had no effective representation since Yashwant Singh Parmar the Chief Minister from old Himachal was holding the powerful decision making authority because of his strong hold over the Congress Party. While there has been a five network of monitoring, collection as well as storage of the apple crop in old Himachal from where the Chief Minister hailed, the newly merged areas have been neglected³ which resulted in an anti-Congress feeling whose only alternative was to support the Janata Party in order to secure their interests and to have significant share in the state politics.

The rich peasantry or the small land lords synonymous with the middle class, to secure their interests, formed an association named Laghu Zamindar Sabha (hereafter LZS) by organising all the small land lords and the middle

3. The Tribune, (Chandigarh) Sept. 19, 1988.

class peasantry in the late sixties in Kangra district particularly Kuwar Durga Chand, President of the Bhartiya Janata Party a new form of Bhartiya Jan Sangh also remained the top leader of the LZS in the late seventies.⁴

In 1977 the Bhartiya Jan Sangh joined the Janata Party and later in 1980 when Janata Party disintegrated, it appeared in the name of the Bhartiya Janata Party. Janata Party also received support from sections other than the rich peasantry like the Baniyas, Mahajans, teachers and other employees like lawyers and N.G.Os., etc. But the leadership of the party remained with the RSS people who usually came from the towns. For instance Shanta Kumar of Palampur, Kishori Lal of Chamba and Jagdev Chand of Hamirpur town.

Various factors contributed to the victory of the Janata Party in the 1977 elections. Different sections of the society carried the message of the Janata Party to the masses and mobilized them against the oppression

4. See Patriot, (New Delhi) July 31, 1977.

of the Congress rule. The role of the intelligentsia was commendable. Their role in politicising the people was really tremendous.

The involvement of students became a great asset to the Janata Party because nearly every family had one or more of their children studying. As such they could carry the Janata message from urban centres to family and village and with that awareness as well. They were perhaps the main agents of Janata Party and helped to take its message to the remotest villages and generate extraordinary excitement among the youths and students. They walked miles to defeat the Congress.

Many others such as the peasant organisations, trade unions and business organisations too played a vital role in the expanding of the Janata wave and defeated Congress. Some people even said that there was no need to canvass for the Janata Party as the masses were looking for a chance which they had got to overthrow the Congress. Thus the defeat of the Congress at the hands of the Janata Party was quite certain because of the atrocities it had committed before the 1977 elections.

The Janata Party was formed by political groups who were involved in a struggle against domination of one party in the country's politics. The creators of Janata Party were motivated by a desire to save Indian democracy which needed alternate parties to rule over the country. The mergerists perceived their attempts at party building as historic because it was done in the name of saving democracy in the country.⁵

The electoral debacle of the Congress in many states of India in 1967 and the split of 1969 in the Congress accelerated the process of a united Front of Opposition parties. The resounding electoral victories of Congress in 1971 and 1972, Parliamentary and State Assembly elections seriously undermined the strategy of the United Front and the unity of the opposition parties.⁶ The Bhartiya Jan Sangh leaders in the pre-emergency period of Indian politics wanted a consolidation of all nationalist and democratic forces in the form of United opposition against the Congress Party.⁷

5. See Bhambri, C.P., The Janata Party - A Profile National Building, House, 1980, New Delhi, p.3.

6. ibid., p. 5.

7. Motherland, (New Delhi), Dec.30, 1974.

On January 18, 1977 Indira Gandhi announced that elections to the Lok Sabha would be held in March. This announcement regarding the elections to the Lok Sabha **revived** the efforts for merger of parties and on January 20, 1977 the four non-communist parties., i.e., the Congress(0), the Bhartiya Jan Sangh, the Bhartiya Lok Dal and socialists agreed to work as one party for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. The new party was called the Janata Party and it decided to contest elections under one flag and one programme.⁸

The experience of the emergency had convinced the opposition parties that their existence was in danger, and the sixth Lok Sabha elections of March 1977 might be a last opportunity for them to challenge the Congress Party's domination over Indian politics. The first step in the formation of Janata Party was dictated by this instinct for survival of opposition parties.

The victory of the Janata Party was ^{due to} its victory in the Lok Sabha elections on the basis of an election wave in its favour. Though election waves are short duration, the party wanted to convert it in its favour by capturing power in the States as well. The Janata Party asked its state

8. Shambri C.P., op.cit., p.16.

legislators to assemble in the State capitals on June 21, 1977 to elect their leaders through election and consensus under the guidance observers nominated by the national head quarters. Formal elections were held to elect party leaders in the states. In Himachal Pradesh Shanta Kumar defeated Ranjeet Singh by 28 to 25 votes and was elected as the Chief Minister of the State. Thus Shanta Kumar took over the office of the Chief Minister and the Janata Party Government started functioning on June 24, 1977⁹ in Himachal Pradesh.

The main focus of the state policy during Shanta Kumar tenure as the Chief Minister was on the provision of rural water supply and other programmes for the upliftment of the poorest people.¹⁰ Prior to 1977 only 3,271 villages in the State had been provided potable drinking water. In contrast within two years Janata Government provided drinking water to as many as 1850 villages and its aim was to cover¹¹ all the villages by 1984.

9. See Statesman (New Delhi), Oct. 25, 1979,

10. See Shanta Kumar, The Tribune (Chandigarh), Aug. 15, 1977.

11. See Statesman, (New Delhi) October 25, 1979.

Establishment of Agriculture University in Palampur and a Sainik School in Sujampur Tihra highlighted the achievements in education. The management of the Ayurvedic College at Paprola was taken over by the Government. Chemical laboratories were set in Kangra district for the tea processing.¹² Right after the ouster of the Janata Party Government in 1980 the Kangra tea industry fell under tea crises the situation of which can be understood from the statement made by the President of the Kangra Valley Tea Planters Association, K.K. Sood that "the tea planters found it very difficult to maintain their gardens due to lack of infrastural facilities."¹³ According to some tea planters, so far, no steps have been taken by the Congress Government to improve the tea industry whereas it was distributing a great deal of money and providing extra-facilities to orchardists of old Himachal. Shanta Kumar who himself is from Kangra had paid special attention towards the tea industry.

The program started by the Janata Party Government for the welfare of the poorest people called Antodya¹⁴ was

12. ibid.

13. See The Hindustan Times (New Delhi) Nov.3, 1986.

14. See Shanta Kumar, The Tribune, (Chandigarh), Aug. 15, 1977.

appreciated by the masses. This was through giving subsidies and employment generating assets to the most downtrodden section of the society to meet their basic needs. By January 1980 around two lakhs people were covered under the Antodya programme.¹⁵

The Thein Dam Agreement was another achievement of the Janata Party according to which Himachal Pradesh would earn Rs. 82.5 lacs per annum of the total power generated the state would receive 4.6% free of cost.¹⁶

Himachal Pradesh had been a perennial food deficit area which had to import its food grains from neighbouring states every year. But with the Janata Government gaining power in the state, there was a definite shift in the priorities. This is reflected in the greater stress on agriculture, providing high yielding variety seeds, popularising the greater use of fertilizer and instructing the farmers

15. See The Tribune, (Chandigarh) Jan. 25, 1980.

16. See Statesman, (New Delhi) Oct. 25, 1979.

in cropping techniques which resulted in almost achievement of sufficiency in food grains.¹⁷

On the welfare front the Janata Government introduced passenger insurance schemes under which the family of road transport traveller would get Rs. 15000 as compensation in case of fatal accident as against Rs. 5000 during the Congress rule with Thakur Ram Lal as the Chief Minister.¹⁸

Abolition of land revenue and surcharge on irrigated land holdings of upto one hectare was another popular measure taken by the new government led by a Chief Minister belonging to the newly merged areas of Himachal Pradesh. A West German aided project was another milestone which was to cover treeless mountaining with suitable trees.¹⁹

By and large the people of Himachal Pradesh were quite satisfied with the schemes launched by Shanta Kumar and they heaved a sign of relief after having suffered under the authoritarian rule of Congress for many years.

17. See The Times of India, (New Delhi) July 26, 1978.

18. ibid., Jan 10, 1978.

19. See The Tribune, (Chandigarh) Jan.25, 1979.

Having discussed the achievements of the Janata Party we shall now analyse its composition and see how the Janata Party was entirely dominated by the RSS which led to the downfall of the party. As the major group in the Janata Party was of Bhartiya Jan Sangh which had RSS leanings. Some people said that the Janata Party in Himachal Pradesh was gradually taking the shape of an RSS government. The Chief Minister Shanta Kumar was elected the leader of the legislative Assembly by defeating Ranjeet Singh a non-RSS M.L.A.²⁰ Shanta Kumar openly declared that he was proud of being an RSS volunteer.²¹ This was followed by the decision of the state Government that the members of the organisations banned during the emergency, would get grants of assistance on a priority basis for the re-establishment of their business centres and to open new avenues. This announcement was an obvious reference to the RSS and the Anand Marg. The only criteria for this credit was six months jail yatra during the emergency. Political party workers who had gone to jail were also entitled to such assistance. But this policy might also have benefitted some hoarders, black

20. See Patriot (New Delhi) Sept. 11, 1977.

21. ibid.

marketers and profiteers who had been detained under the 'Maintenance of Internal Security Act; legitimately.

Himachal a very religious state considered to be the abode of many Hindu gods, came under the influence of Jan Sangh dominated government for the first time after the Assembly elections in 1977. Janata Party workers in some areas were compelled by the people to join RSS Shakhas if they wanted jobs, transfers and other facilities. RSS which claimed to be a cultural organisation had in fact assumed the role of guiding the government after the Janata Party victory in the 1977 elections.²² It was the RSS which was working as the main force behind the policy making process of the Janata Party Government. Shyama Sharma, Food Minister was once even attacked by RSS cadres at the Mall Road, Shimla for not acting along RSS lines and issuing warnings to many shopkeepers who were RSS supporters, to display their price lists and desist from raising prices of essential commodities in particular.²³ Chief Minister Shanta Kumar's pro-RSS policy can be seen from his policy of appointing pro-RSS people to high offices of the State Government. The Himachal Pradesh Advocate General belonged

22. See Patriot, (New Delhi) Sept.13, 1977.

23. New Age, (New Delhi) Aug. 14, 1977.

to the RSS cadre, the Vice-Chancellor of Himachal Pradesh University was an Akhil Bhartiya Vidhyarthi Parishad sympathiser and many others were shown favour.²⁴ Some of the leaders of the Janata Party who stood with the RSS were Nikku Ram, Sri Ram Zakhmi, Hari Dass, Sunder Lal Verma and Ramesh Gupta.²⁵ These leaders attacking on Prime Minister Morarji Desai declared that the Janata Party in Himachal Pradesh would disintegrate in case RSS workers left the Government.²⁶ However, there were legislators in the same party who stressed on cutting links with the RSS as otherwise it could destroy the party. Daulat Ram Sankhyan a prominent Janata Party legislator, described the RSS as most shocking and misleading. He cautioned the Janata Party men against the designs of RSS which aimed at a political establishment sought to be accomplished through a fascist, dogmatic and sectarian approach.²⁷

24. See Patriot, (New Delhi), Nov. 30, 1978,

25. See Statesman, (New Delhi), Sept. 2, 1977.

26. ibid.

27. ibid.

Presence of RSS elements in the Janata Party was criticised by many organisations. Himachal Pradesh trade unions of employees and workers completely rejected the RSS leaders who were trying to capture employees, teachers and working classes. The council meeting which was attended by representatives of twenty two progressive organisations of workers and employees of Banks, transport, P.W.D., N.G.Os, electricity, forest, municipal, hospitals, hotels, tourism, power projects and peasants, in a statement noted with serious concerns the steps taken by Government to deal with trade unions and employees struggles and agitations. These organisations were against the patronage given to RSS workers during the tenure of Shanta Kumar as the Chief Minister.²⁸ The Communist Party of India in a meeting held from 15th March to 17th March, 1978 accused the Janata Party to be dominated by the RSS.²⁹

Inclusion of RSS elements in the Janata Party led to intra-party conflicts and further factionalism in the party. As a result the Janata Party collapsed on 14th

28. See Patriot, (New Delhi), Sept. 4, 1980.

29. Ibid, March 18, 1978.

February, 1980 which resulted in the reemergence of the Congress as the ruling party.³⁰ The infighting and factionalism in the Janata Party was on higher scale than in the past. The unbalanced representation and discriminatory attitude of Janata Government part led to its downfall.³¹ Many Congressmen were removed from the various posts in Himachal Pradesh administration. Satyawati Parmar wife of former Chief Minister Y.S.Parmar was removed from the chairmanship of Himachal Pradesh Handicrafts and Handloom Corporation. Kewal Ram Chauhan and Sunder Singh were removed from the Board of Directors of the Himachal Pradesh State Cooperative Bank Limited.³²

The infighting in the Janata Party had started as early as 1977 amongst the legislative members. The state had been in the grip of political instability ever since the Janata Party took over in the state. However, it were the people who had been victims of the power struggle within

30. See The Times of India, (New Delhi), Feb.15, 1980.

31. See Patriot, (New Delhi), July 16, 1977.

32. See The Tribune, (Chandigarh), Sept. 8, 1977.

the Janata legislative party. The struggle between the ministerials and the dissidents had retarded the state's development though it had some achievements to its credit.

The resignation of Kishori Lal, P.W.D. Minister deepened the crises within the Janata Party. It was the first time that a Minister had ever quit since the first popular ministry, headed by Y.S.Parmar was installed in 1952. The only incident occurred when Y.S.Parmar dismissed Salig Ram who had joined hands with the dissident Congressmen.³³ In this case too there was similar sentiment, Shanta Kumar Chief Minister suspected that Kishori Lal was shifting his loyalty to another Janata Party leader and helping the dissidents to topple him. The dissident leader Satya Dev Bushahri tried to oust Shanta Kumar from Chief Minister's office with the help of Kanwar Durga Chand and Ranjeet Singh.³⁴ The issue of alleged corruption in the recruitment of more than 200 clerks in the State Electricity Board by Kishori Lal came handy and Shanta Kumar stripped him off the portfolio of PWD which Kishori Lal had held since the formation of the Janata

33. See The Tribune, (Chandigarh), March 30, 1979.

34. See The Times of India, (New Delhi) Jan.10, 1981.

Government, as a measure of retiliation. The Minister felt humiliated and submitted his resignation on March 17, 1979.³⁵

Constant changes posed by the dissidents to the Chief Minister forced him to reintroduce the 'spoils system'. He expanded his ministry soon after winning a vote of confidence on April 19, 1979. Those of his supporters who could not be accomodated were made chairmen of various autonomous corporations. This by and large assuaged the feelings of his group and the possibility of any of his supporters crossing over to the dissidents fold was reduced to an extent.

When in 1980 the Janata Party Government had totally collapsed in the centre its effect on Himachal Pradesh was remarkable. Over thirty MLAs of the Janata Party shifted their allegiance to the Congress Party and Thakur Ram Lal of the Congress Party became the Chief Minister of the State.³⁶

35. See The Tribune, (Chandigarh), March 30, 1979.

36. See The Times of India, (New Delhi) Feb.15, 1980.

The picture what we get from the above analysis of the Janata Party and its performance in Himachal Pradesh suggests that ugly infighting within the Janata Party and the influence of the RSS on the Government led to its collapse. Also the urge for stability and strong government among the people were the other motivations behind the people's vote for the Congress(I) and against the Janata Party. The Janata Party had managed to pitter away all the immense goodwill with which it had come to power in the state and in the rest of the country. A parralel can be drawn with the recent debacle of the Congress(I) in 1989 General Elections. It too frittered away the unprecedented mandate of 1984.

CONCLUSION

Himachal Pradesh during the years 1966-86 had undergone considerable change. Social and Political change liberated the people from the shackles of oppressive customs and traditions. Expansion of communication facilities increased social mobility and contributed in a big measure to the awareness of the people. The state has made big strides in education, the literacy rate which was only 7% in 1948 has risen to 42% in 1986. Education played a vital role in removing the social evils from the society and paved the way for an all round development.

There is also a tendency of capitalist penetration of the economy. With the developments in trade, industry, and agriculture especially of cash crops such as apples, potatoes, ginger and dry fruits, there is a significant development of market economy and contractual social relations. However the feudal elements seem to have retained their influence in the superstructure as can be revealed partly by an analysis of the social background

of the political parties.

The caste-class configuration of the political parties seem to be as follows. The big land lords joined the state politics to secure their vested interests and became the leaders of the Congress Party. The depressed classes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes supported Congress because of its pro-poor image. The minorities extended their support to the Congress Party because it claimed to be a secular party. The role of the Congress Party was appreciated by the hill people. Under the leadership of Dr. Y.S.Parmar hill people were able to achieve the goal of separate identity for their hill region under his leadership. But during the emergency imposed by the same party, people had to face oppression and exploitation of different kinds. All this resulted in the downfall of the party and the emergence of the Janata Party under the leadership of Shanta Kumar. The role of Shanta Kumar and his programmes for the development of the state were recognised by the people, particularly of lower regions of Himachal Pradesh. Of the 53 MLAs of the Janata Party, the majority belonged to the Bhartiya Jan Sangh (pro-RSS), while 18 were from the Congress Party which they deserted in 1977. The Janata Party was seemed to

to have dominated by the RSS elements which led to clash of interests among the MLAs and further led to factionalism. As a result the Janata Government could not last long.

In recent years there has been considerable shift in the mass base of different political parties. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who were formerly part of the Congress vote banks seems to have shifted their support to the B.J.P., not because they liked that party's ideology, but because of the dissatisfaction with Congress rule. The emergence of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) as the protector of the interests of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes also undermined Congress influence amongst these groups. This shift can be seen in the defeat of the Congress (I) in all the tribal segments of the Mandi Parliamentary Constituency in the 1989 elections. The mass base of the political parties which was more or less region - based in the 1970s and early 1980s has undergone a change. The Congress Party was penetrating the BJP dominated areas like Kangra, Hamirpur, Una, Mandi and Chamba, whereas BJP spread its organisation towards the upper reaches like Kulu, Lahaul & Spiti, Kinnaur, Shimla and Sirmur. BJP has come to stay in the state politics because of its good

organisational structure and party cohesiveness. People also supported BJP because of the anti-congress feeling they have in their minds. The two communist parties CPI and CPI (M) have lesser prospects in the state politics because of certain socio-economic reasons. As the upper strata of the society is with the Congress (I), the lower most which earlier supported the Congress has been shifting its interests towards the BJP. The middle class forms the mass base of BJP. However certain sections of the society like students, employees, trade unions and peasants are swayed by the appeal of the communists. The border of Himachal with Punjab and Haryana which is basically industrially advanced is dominated by the communists.

To conclude this study it can be said that the party politics in Himachal Pradesh has been of single party dominance of Congress, due to certain above discussed reasons but in the recent years there seems to be a shift in the mass base of the different political parties and thus change in the support structure position and the functioning, of the parties with the changing pattern of the economy of Himachal Pradesh.

Table - 1

YEARWISE VOTERS PARTICIPATION

<u>Year of Election</u>	<u>Electorate</u>	<u>Votes Number</u>	<u>Polled %</u>	<u>Valid votes</u>
1967	1582103	810353	51.2	766119
1972	1805488	901751	49.9	878245
1977	1997329	1169894	58.6	1152071
1982	2211524	1571574	71.6	1550296
1985	2356932	1658426	70.4	1640927

Source: V.B. Singh and Shankar Bose - State Elections in India, Data Handbook on Vidhan Sabha Elections- 1952 - 85 Vol. I p.31.

Table - 2

YEARWISE DISTRIBUTION OF NUMBER OF SEATS FOR STATE LEGISLATURE ASSEMBLY

<u>Year of Election</u>	<u>Total Number of seats</u>	<u>SC</u>	<u>ST</u>	<u>General</u>
1967	60	14	3	43
1972	68	16	3	49
1977	68	15	3	50
1982	68	16	3	49
1985	68	16	3	49

Source: V.B. Singh & Shankar Bose- State Elections in India, Data Handbook on Vidhan Sabha Elections 1952,85 Vol. I, p.31.

Table - 3

SERIAL NO. OF ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES IN
DIFFERENT ELECTIONS

<u>Name of the District</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1977/80/85</u>
1. Kinnaur	1	1	1
2. Simla	2-8	2-9	2-9
3. Solan	9-13	10-14	10-14
4. Sirmur	14-17	15-19	15-19
5. Bilaspur	18-20	20-23	20-23
6. Hamirpur	21-25, 30 (part)	24-28	24-28
7. Una	26-29	29-33	29-33
8. Kangra	30 (part), 31-43	30-50	34-49
9. Chamba	44-48	51-55	50-54
10. Lahul & Spiti	49	56	55
11. Kulu	50-52	52-59	56-58
12. Mandi	53-60	60-68	59-68

Source : V.B. Singh and Shanker Bose.

Table - 4

PARTYWISE DISTRIBUTION OF PERCENT VOTES POLLED, CANDIDATES FIELDDED, ELECTED, AND
LOST DEPOSIT.

1967

TOTAL SEATS - 60

	INC*	NCO	CPI	CPM	SSP	PSP	BJS	SWA	LKD	RPI	IND	TOTAL
Votes polled	42.2	-	2.9	0.4	01		13.9	1.9	-	05	381	100.00
Candidates	60	-	11	6	1	2	33	5	-	4	147	269
Elected	34	-	2	-	-	-	7	1	-	-	16	60
Elected by 50%	16	-	1	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	9	31
LostDeposit	2	-	7	6	1	2	13	1	-	4	103	139

Source: V.B. Singh & Shankar Bose, p.33.

* Indian National Congress

Table - 5

PARTYWISE DISTRIBUTION OF PERCENT VOTES POLLED CANDIDATES FIELDDED
ELECTED AND LOST DEPOSIT

1972

TOTAL SEATS - 68

	INC	NCO	CPI	CPM	SSP	PSP	BJS	SWA	LKD	RPI *State Party	IND	TOTAL
Votes polled	538	2.1	2.4	1.1	0.1	-	7.7	-	-	- 5.0	28.3	99.9
Candidates	68	18	10	4	2	-	31	-	-	- 16	148	297
Elected	53	-	-	1	-	-	5	-	-	- 2	7	68
Elected by 50%	38	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	- 1	3	44
Lost deposit	2	14	5	3	2	-	21	-	-	- 3	109	165

Source : V.B. Singh & Shankar Bose, p. 33.

*State Party was known as Lok Raj Party

Total - 61977TOTAL SEATS - 68

	INC*	CPI	CPM	BJS/BJP	JNP	LKD	IND	TOTAL
Votes polled	27.7	2.4	0.2	-	49.0	-	20.7	100.0
Candidates	57	8	3	-	68	-	194	330
Elected	9	-	-	-	53	-	6	68
Elected by 50%	5	-	-	-	34	-	2	41
Lost deposit	7	4	3	-	2	-	107	183

Note :- NCO, SSP PSP & RPI & other parties were not in the field.

* Indian National Congress

Source : V.B. Singh & Shankar Bose, p.33.

Table - 7

1982

TOTAL SEATS - 68

	INC*	CPI	CPM	BJP	JNP	LKD	IND	Total
Votes polled	42.2	1.7	0.2	35.2	4.8	1.5	14.2	100.1
Candidates	67	20	3	67	50	30	204	441
Elected	31	-	-	29	2	-	6	68
Elected by 50%	18	-	-	13	1	-	1	33
Lost deposit	1	18	3	11	44	28	184	289

Note :- NCO SSP PSP RPI & other parties were not in the field.

*Indian National Congress

Source : V.B. Singh & Shankar Bose, p. 33.

Table - 8

1985

TOTAL SEATS - 68

Party	INC	CPI	CPM	BJP	JNP	LKD	IND	Total
Votes polled	55.5	1.6	0.5	3.6	2.1	1.4	8.3	100.0
Candidates	68	16	7	57	7	3	136	294
Elected	58	-	-	7	-	1	2	68
Elected by 50%	45	-	-	5	-	1	1	52
Lost deposits	-	14	6	8	4	-	127	159

Source - V.B. Singh, S. Bose, p. 33.

Table - 9

HIMACHAL PRADESH CONGRESS PARTY. POSITION IN LEGISLATURE AND PARLIAMENT

<u>Years</u>	<u>Legislature</u>			<u>Parliament</u>	
	<u>Total seats</u>	<u>Congress</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Total Seats</u>	<u>Congress</u>
1952-57	41	28	68.3	4	4
1957-62	41	22	53.7	4	4
1962-67	41	34	83.0	4	4
1967-72	60	34	56.6	4	4
1972-77	68	53	77.9	4	4
1977-82	68	9	13.2	4	-
1982-85	68	31	45.6	4	4
1985	65	55	84.6	4	4

Source : Ranbir Sharma (Politics of Himachal Pradesh in T.R. Sharma, (Ed),
Indian Politics, Uppal Pub. New Delhi, 1986.
pp.229.

Table - 10

ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE OF CONGRESS PARTY IN VIDHAN SABHA ELECTIONS

Votes %	<u>1967</u>		Votes %	<u>1971</u>		Votes %	<u>1977</u>	
	Seats %	No		Seats %	No		Seats %	No
42.17	56.66	34	49.09	78.00	53	27.74	13.23	9
<hr/>								
Votes %	<u>1982</u>		Votes %	<u>1985</u>				
	Seats %	No		Seats %	No			
43.53	45.60	31	84.6		55			

Source : Ranbir Sharma, in (Ed.) T.R. Sharma, p.229.

Table - 11

ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE OF CONGRESS PARTY (LOK SABHA)

<u>1967</u>			<u>1971</u>			<u>1977</u>		
Votes %	Seats %	No	Votes %	Seats %	No	Votes %	Seats %	No
48.35	100	4	78.85	100	4	38.56	0	Nil
<u>1980</u>			<u>1985</u>					
Votes %	Seats %	No	Votes %	Seats %	No			
52.10	100	4	68.65	100	4			

Source : Ranbir Sharma, p.233.

Table - 12

<u>AREA UNDER ORCHARDS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH</u>	<u>(AS PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL AREA UNDER (HIT CULTIVATION)</u>
1. Total area of Himachal Pradesh	14000000 acres (approx.)
2. Area under cultivation	1467180 acres (10% of the total area)
3. Area under fruit	85000 acres (5.8 percent of the total cultivation area).
4. Area under apple orchards	57767 acres (68% of the total area under fruit cultivation).

Source : T.R. Sharma, Oligopoly of Power in Himachal Pradesh, in (Ed) New Challenge in Indian Politics, Uppal Pub. , New Delhi, 1986, p.267.

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