

**Caste and Coalition Governments in
Bihar (1967-72)**

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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1985

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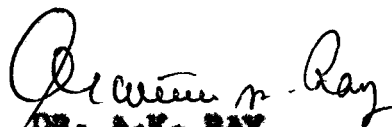
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DECLARATION

Certified that this dissertation is approved for submission to the examiners in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy. The material in this dissertation has not been previously submitted for a degree of this or any other University.


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I must express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Zoya Hasan for her remarkable patience which she showed in guiding my present research assignment. She took pains to go into minutes details of the present work which certainly have been very much annoying. Her guidance was process of learning and improvement for me.

I am very much thankful to Dr. Jawaharlal Pandey of NCERT for the encouragement and help in this research. I am grateful to Dr. Haridwar Rai, Head of the Department of Political Science, Bhagalpur University for his kind affection and assistance for my research work. I am very thankful to Anand, Murari, Deepankar, Lama, Abbha, Fahima and Achyutanand for their affection and encouragement in the progress of this work.

I am extremely grateful to the Jawaharlal Nehru University Library staff for their assistance in all times.

And to my Parents I do not have any word to say because it is their love and blessing which was the sole strength for me to complete this research.

January 1985

SUMITRA KUMAR JAIN

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

INTRODUCTION

Bihar's social-structure^{is} dominated by castes and tribes. It was reinforced by the zamindari system in the colonial period. The zamindars were drawn predominantly from castes at the apex of the ritual hierarchy especially Bhumihars, Brahmins with smaller number of Kayasthas, Rajputs and Muslims. The poor middle peasantry were drawn mainly from lower middle and lower castes. And agricultural labourer mainly from scheduled castes. This agrarian structure was not substantially changed even after the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793. The dominance of four upper castes, remained unchanged, throughout the 19th century and early 20th century. So the economy of the State was seriously inhibited by the traditional feudal culture of the peasant society. The traditional values, and norms of the social ethos have always obstructed and hindered the process of smooth political development.

The present study seeks to analyse the interaction between caste and politics in the State of Bihar. The phenomenon of casteism has been much more pronounced in Bihar than in the other States of India. The most important and striking fact about Bihar is that politics

in the State is conducted almost ubiquitously through the idiom of caste. It is because of the availability of multiple caste and caste-combinations that Bihar more than any other State in India presents a picture of highly cleavaged society. Not only the number of castes and sub-castes is very large and perplexing, but the political assertion of each caste or caste group has also left an imprint on the political process of State. Writing about Bihar, Harry W. Blair noted that although: "Relatively poor by Indian standard it is by most measures of modernity, A backward region in a backward economy. It has also long been notorious as a stronghold of political casteism. The Bihari's did not wait until independence to mobilise caste group for political purpose but they began to do so in the 1920's and have continued ever since."

The pre-independence period of Bihar politics was monopolised by the upper castes. The Kayastha's being the most educated exploited the benefits of colonial rule. They were also the first to form caste associations because of their political and educational consciousness. But the dominance of Kayasthas' was soon challenged by other caste-groups and particularly Bhumihars, who were relatively more

numerous and economically more powerful. The rising aspirations of Bhumihars and their potential organization and political assertiveness compelled Kayasthas to enter into an alliance with the emerging caste of Rajputs in order to counter the growing influence of Bhumihars. The emergence of Brahmins in the political scene of Bihar was later than other groups since they acquired leadership position for the first time in 1938. But they steadily enhanced their position and influence after that.

In Bihar the Indian National Congress was dominated by the upper castes. Congress failed to check the pernicious influence of caste in Bihar politics. Its failure became evident when elections to local bodies were held in the early twenties and in the 1937 elections. The 1937 election provided an opportunity to each of the upper castes to play an effective role in the political process of the State. Caste affiliations ~~became~~ were recognized and utilized for purposes of political mobilization. As a result after this election the Bihar Congress was divided into two main groups under the leadership of Sri Krishn Sinha (Bhumihar) and Anugrah Narayan Sinha (Rajput).

The attainment of independence in Bihar initiated a new process. Before 1952 general election, voting rights were based on property and educational qualification, therefore politics was the monopoly of upper castes, because they were land-owning castes and also the first to take to education. But the adult franchise made the difference, because it brought all the numerically superior castes mainly backward castes into the political process of State. Undoubtedly during the early period of independence the power structure of the State was dominated by upper castes and leadership of Congress Party came from upper castes until the 1967 election. But after the 1957 election and particularly after 1962 election, a new social force became evident in Bihar's social and political life. This was evident in the growth of political consciousness among the intermediary or backward castes. And in this way the new situation enabled these castes to assert their political interest as the upper castes which hitherto dominated Bihar Congress in the initial stage of political mobilization were compelled by the growing political competition among themselves to seek and mobilise additional bases of support. They did it by recruiting

supporters of the lower castes. Besides this rise of strength of backward castes MLA in legislative assembly in 1957 and in 1962 also compelled the leaders of upper caste to seek their support for their survival in the power-structure of the State. This brought about a change in the balance of political forces which reshaped caste alignments. A new kind of political mobilisation among backward castes took place and they started to assert themselves as an important force in the power politics of the State.

The political implications of mobilization and competition of various castes resulted in the crystallization of new political forces which challenged Congress hegemony through the support of backward caste. Until the 1967 election the backward castes were not in a position to influence the politics of the State. But after the election the backward castes could assert their dominance in the formation of the governments, because the realignment which occurred after the defeat of the Congress ushered in a prolonged period of instability and coalition politics in Bihar.

The fourth general election of 1969 marked a watershed in the history of political mobilization of the various castes in Bihar. This election effected some significant changes at the mass level of State politics. A new trend was evident after this election, when the old social and political order dominated by forward castes was challenged by the upcoming backward castes who were encouraged by the emerging polarisation between upper and middle and backward ~~and~~^{or} forward castes in Bihar. The 1967 election provided an opportunity for the political articulation of the growing dissatisfaction of the lower middle castes which enabled them to compete for political power. Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav took the initiative in mobilizing the backward castes. Before the 1967 election, R.L.S. Yadav asserted that backwards must get their due share in political power, to achieve this he arranged a dialogue among the leaders of backward castes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes to support all those candidates belonging to these caste groups irrespective of the political parties they belonged to. When the United Front was formed by non-Congress political parties on the eve of election and the slogan of anti-Congressism was accepted as its basic principle, the core of the backward castes

rallied their support behind the Front. In view of the newly acquired political influence and mobilization of backward castes it is not surprising that in the nine governments formed between 1967-72 as many as seven were led by the leaders belonging to the backward castes group. The acute instability of this coalition period was sharply evident in the shifting loyalties of various factions and imbalances in the support of caste leaders particularly the backward castes. So what became evident from the coalition period was a peculiar political combination of backward caste domination in alliance with the upper castes. But the emergence of backward castes has not necessarily altered the structure of domination to the disadvantage of upper castes. What needs to be examined is the extent to which backward castes exercise influence in Bihar politics and economy? Did the backward castes influence the policies and programmes of the coalition governments for their betterment in the social, economic and political sphere? This also needs to be examined in the analysis of the coalition period.

The present study is organized in four chapters. The first chapter is devoted to an overview of caste in pre-independence Bihar politics. It will deal with the

early phase of modern politics in Bihar. The study will try to see the role of castes in the movement for separation of Bihar from Bengal and it will take into account the 1937 election which brought the caste into prominence in State politics.

The second chapter deals with caste-based factions, which was an important phenomenon in the pre-coalition period. The focus will be on the first phase of democratic politics in Bihar (1947-67); a period when the upper caste monopolised the power structure. An attempt will be made to explain how each of the upper castes politically mobilized their respective castes and could occupy a prominent place in power structure of the State. The study will seek to understand how the upper castes prevented the backward castes from sharing the power by the process of co-optation of the elites of these castes into their respective faction for their survival in the power.

The third chapter which is the main focus of the study examines those factors which led to the emergence of backward castes and their demand for larger share in the power structure. The study will examine the role

played by caste in coalition government, and to what extent this contributed to instability in Bihar. It would be important to examine how the conception of anti-Congressism evolved by Ram Manohar Lohia provided a fillip to political mobilization to backward castes and how it attracted them to an alternative platform for power struggle provided by United Front of non-Congress opposition parties. The study will also deal with the formation of coalition governments performance and gains and also the causes which account for their fall during the first phase of non-Congress coalition government.

The fourth chapter describes the mixed coalition governments in Bihar. This period of 1969-71 is studied in a separate chapter because after 1969 mid-term poll the situation was very different in Bihar in the sense that now the opposition parties were not in a position to form the government without the support of the Congress Party. During this period Congress being the single largest party controlled two out of the five coalition governments. The chapter will also examine the role of Congress Party in bringing the fall of the non-Congress coalition governments because being the largest party it tried to destabilise the opposition-led ministries.

On the whole the present study attempts to trace the factors at the various stages of Bihar politics through which politics was sharpened by the articulation of different demands of various caste groups. It will also see how the casteism developed in the period of coalition governments.

However, the limitation of this study is that there are very few monographs on modern Bihar and particularly of the coalition period. So the study is based mainly on secondary sources, except the few primary sources like — Government records (Gazette and Civil list of Bihar Government); Census reports of Government of India; Caste Association Journals; private papers; memoirs and biographies of the leaders of Bihar. Thus the present study with the help of primary and secondary sources will try to examine the role of caste in coalition governments.

Chapter I

CASTE IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE BIHAR POLITICS

CASTE IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE BIHAR POLITICS

In the pre-independence period Bihar was socially conservative, economically stagnant and religiously full of superstitions. The principal feature of social life was the rigidity and importance of the caste system. Inter-caste or inter-sub-caste marriage and inter-dining were completely out of the questions. Persons belonging to lower castes also rigidly observed the caste rules.¹ On the whole Bihar's society in the 18th and 19th centuries seemed to present a grim picture of a closed society painted with innumerable taboos and orthodoxies.

This chapter focusses on the political emergence of castes and investigates the reasons and processes by which it came to acquire a central role in Bihar's politics and society. The attainment of higher education enabled different castes to compete for new opportunities and jobs created by British rule. In the process caste associations began to play an important role in the politics of the State. Finally, the chapter will examine the impact

1. Buchanan, Account of the District of Patna and Gaya (reprint) (Patna, 1925).

of social, economic and political situation on different caste in relation to their role in early period of Bihar politics.

The number of caste and sub-castes in Bihar is very large and perplexing. In terms of ritual status Brahmin, Kshatriya, Bhumihaar and Kayastha form the upper caste, while Vaisya, Yadavas, Kurmis excluding the scheduled castes and tribes are known as intermediary castes.

Table I

MAJOR CASTE GROUPS IN BIHAR²

Categories and caste-groups	Percentage of total population
UPPER CASTES:	
Brahmins	4.9
Bhumihaars	3.9
Rajput	4.2
Kayastha	1.2
Total	14.2

2. Census of India 1931

Harry W. Blair, "Ethnicity & Democratic Politics in India — Caste as a Different Mobilizer in Bihar" (unpublished paper), quoted in M.P. Singh op.cit., p.197.

Categories and caste-groups	Percentage of total population
LOWER-MIDDLE CASTES:	
Yadav	11.0
Koiris	4.1
Kurmi	3.6
Bania	0.6
Total:	19.3
LOWER CASTES:	
Barhi	1.0
Dhamuk	1.8
Kahar	1.7
Kandu	1.6
Kumhar	1.3
Lohar	1.3
Mallah	1.5
Nai	1.6
Tatwa	2.8
Others (less than 1%)	16.0
Total:	23.2
MUSLIMS	12.5

As we know the upper caste group is constituted by Brahmins, Bhumihars, Rajputs and Kayasthas. Among these the highest ritual and social status has been held by the Brahmins, whose traditional caste occupation was priesthood, though some of them have been prominent landlords of the State. The Bhumihars are largely land-holders and they owned large parts of land in the State. Kayasthas were educationally the most advanced community in the State. They were primarily traditional scribes and government servants.

The category of middle castes comprises the four castes of Yadavas, Kurmis, Koiris and Banias. Yadavas constituted the single largest caste in the State. Yadavas, Kurmis, and Koiris were mainly peasant castes. Some of them have been prominent landlords of the State. Kurmis in particular were educationally as advanced as many of the upper castes.

The category of lower castes occupies a fairly low position in the social-economic hierarchy. Most of them belong to the class of landless labourers and some of them have adopted rural craftsmanship. They are socially,

economically and culturally the most backward community in the State.

The scheduled caste and tribes belong to the lower ring of the social structure. It is because of their social and economic backwardness that these two communities were given protection and advantage in the Indian constitution.

The Table- II gives the general picture of the distribution of the various castes group in Bihar. The Hindu caste are largely (but do not wholly) concentrated in the Northern Bihar and the South Bihar plains. Among them the upper castes have a slightly higher concentration in the districts of South Bihar plains. The lower castes (excluding scheduled castes) are concentrated in South Bihar plains and the scheduled castes are more or less equally spread in the South Bihar and the North Bihar plains. Muslims are scattered throughout the State, with a little over average concentrated in the North Bihar plains. The scheduled tribes are almost concentrated in the Chotanagpur plateau.

In the pre-independence period, particularly during the 18th century and early 19th century there was

Table- II

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF CASTES IN VARIOUS REGION OF BIHAR³

Castes	North Bihar	South Bihar	Chotanagpur	State of Bihar
Upper Castes	13.8	18.4	7.7	13.2
Lower Castes or Backward Castes	56.3	55.6	48.4	52.2
Scheduled Castes	14.0	16.8	11.9	14.1
Scheduled Tribes	7.3	1.2	8.0	11.5
Muslims	15.3	9.7	8.0	11.5

3. Census of India, 1931.

a striking absence of dominant caste (in the sense M.N. Srinivas referred to the terms) at the provincial level. Dominant status can't be ascribed to a single caste in Bihar, because the landlords in Bihar plains belonged to almost all upper castes who owned a sizeable portion of land in Bihar. Kayastha who were not generally land owning caste exercised much influence as they had been traditionally the most literate caste. But in the early period of Bihar's history there was no strong intermediary castes who owned substantial land like the Kammas and Reddis in Andhra; Okkaligas in Mysore and Patidars in Gujarat. Of course, Yadavas and Kurmis were land owning castes of contemporary Bihar, but they controlled less than 20 per cent land at the village and local level. They came into prominence only in late 19th century or early 20th century.

In Bihar the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 introduced a new form of landlordism with an intricate stratification of zamindars, tenant landlords, tenants and sub-tenants and agricultural labourer at the bottom. The upper castes in Bihar own 78.6 per cent of the total land

area and thereby dominate the economic life of Bihar.⁴ The Table- III will try to show the association of castes with leasing out of land in some of the sampled villages of Bihar, which will help to see the land distribution patterns among the major caste group in Bihar.

From the Table- III it appears that upper castes own the maximum land in Bihar. Since they cultivate land, they lease out land for cultivation to other lower castes. In addition, they also hire agricultural labourers for the direct cultivation of land. The lower castes and scheduled tribes own nominal land and scheduled castes are mostly agriculture labourers.

The agriculture economy of Bihar was based on primitive technology and agro-based handicrafts at the household level in the early period of pre-independence. Land was concentrated in the hands of a few big land owners. Agrarian structure was marked with zamindars at the top and vast masses of landless agricultural labourers at the base.

4. N.K. Singh, "Many Faces of Caste Politics", Economic and Political Weekly, 18 April 1972, p.798.

Table- III : ASSOCIATION OF CASTE WITH LEASING OUT OF LAND IN THE SAMPLED VILLAGES OF BIHAR⁵

Ownership-size-group	Number of Household	Upper caste Hindus		Lower middle castes		Lower caste		Scheduled tribes		Muslims		
		Number	Per-centage	Number	Per-centage	Number	Per-centage	Number	Per-centage	Number	Per-centage	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
0.01-2.50 acres	Before Zamindari-abolition	7	5	71.42	-	-	1	14.29	1	17.29	-	-
	After Zamindari abolition	15	12	80.0	1	6.69	1	6.69	-	-	1	6.69
2.51-5.00	BZ	16	10	62.50	-	-	5	31.25	-	-	3	6.25
	AZ	17	8	47.06	2	11.76	4	25.53	-	-	3	17.65
5.01-7.50	BZ	10	8	80.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	20.00
	AZ	11	7	63.64	-	-	1	9.09	-	-	3	27.29
7.51-10.00	BZ	24	16	66.67	3	12.50	2	8.33	-	-	3	12.50
	AZ	21	15	71.43	2	9.52	3	14.29	-	-	1	5.76
10.01-15.00	BZ	23	15	69.56	1	4.35	2	8.70	-	-	4	17.39
	AZ	27	19	70.37	1	3.70	2	7.41	-	-	5	18.12
15.01-20.00	BZ	14	9	64.29	3	21.43	1	7.14	-	-	1	7.14
	AZ	19	14	73.69	3	15.79	1	5.26	-	-	1	5.20

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20.01-30.00	BZ	22	19	86.36	2	9.03	-	-	-	-	1	4.55
	AZ	21	19	90.48	1	4.76	-	-	-	-	1	4.76
30.01-50.00	BZ	21	16	76.19	2	9.52	-	-	-	-	3	14.29
	AZ	21	16	76.19	3	14.32	-	-	-	-	2	9.52
50.01-100.00	BZ	12	12	100.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	AZ	10	9	90.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	10.00
100.00-above	BZ	6	5	83.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	16.67
	AZ	3	2	66.67	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	33.33
All groups	BZ	155	116	78.84	11	7.10	11	7.10	1	0.69	16	10.32
	AZ	165	121	78.33	3	7.88	12	7.27	-	-	18	11.52

5. The Bihar Land Reforms Act 1950 & The Bihar Land Reforms Act 1961 (Ceiling of Land holding and acquisition of surplus land) quoted in Ghanshyam Ojha, Land Problems and Land Reforms — A Study With Reference to Bihar (New Delhi: Sultan Chand & Sons,), pp.214-16.

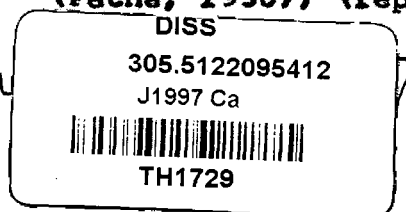
Trade was not much of importance in the way it was in Bengal, Gujarat and some other coastal regions. Nevertheless Bihar's grain trade was very considerable. Wheat was exported to Murshidabad (Bengal) and rice came from Dinajpur (Bengal) and Nepal.

Weaving was one of the important crafts in early pre-independence period of Bihar. Purnea and Bhagalpur were major centres, other areas too had flourishing weaving industries. Women were employed in large scale. Bhagalpur was famous for its silk production.⁶

In Bihar the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793, the administrative unification, the colonial government and commerce did not upset the social relationship as greatly as in Bengal proper. The dominance of four upper castes — Brahmin, Rajpur, Bhumihar and Kayastha remained unchanged throughout the 19th and early 20th century. Land settlement in fact served to confirm the place of the high castes as landlords. Thus this continuing dominance of zamindars stabilized the existing order which impede the growth of political consciousness in the province.

TH-1729

6. Buchanan, Account of the District of Bhagalpur (Patna, 1930); (reprint), pp.636-39.



Unlike Bengal and some other parts of country, Bihar was not able to generate the forces which could have challenged traditional authority. Bihar did not initiate a Brahmo Samaj, Satya Sodhak Samaj, or Arya Samaj Movement. Moreover income from land was more than sufficient for the landlords, that is why they did not attempt other avenues of income, which was partly why ~~Bihar~~ ^{Bihar} failed to produce a capitalist class of its own in the colonial period. The nondevelopment of this class reinforced the status of landlords. There was no social group except the urban middle class, which could have competed with the zamindars in Bihar society.

As mentioned earlier in the traditional system the Kayastha were below the Brahmin, Rajput and Bhumihaar, but they were more advanced in the field of education. They were traditionally associated with literacy and education which was a necessary asset for them since they did not own much land and traditionally belonged to the salaried class. Srivastava, a Kayastha sub-caste were the first to acquire English education and they were only second to Bengalis in utilising the job opportunities and other

profession in Bihar over a period of time. Upper sections of other caste realised the importance of English education and started sending their children to English medium schools.

The net result of the expansion of modern education was creation of a section of English educated people who entered government jobs, legal profession, teaching and judicial services. These people composed the urban middle class of Bihar and developed a different set of interests (which was to avail the new opportunities by means of education in terms of government jobs) from the traditional land owners. But this new interest group unlike the urban middle class of the neighbouring province (like Bengal) failed to develop voluntary associations to further their interest. So this failure led them to form caste association which gave birth to modern casteism in Bihar.

In the 19th century only upper castes were the people who had resources to take advantage of the available opportunities. In the 20th century intermediary and lower castes also formed their associations. But the early politics of the province centred around association of

upper caste people. The basic thrust of the early politics was competition among the four upper castes for access to new opportunities. The respective caste association started mobilizing caste members to extend educational facilities to them, so that they could dominate the colonial administration in order to preserve their economic power and social status. They tried to control not by holding the office themselves, but by the patronage they could wield. This patronage they gave to ambitious section of their caste brothers, which did not have much resources and was taking up English education in order to enter into government jobs and other modern professions. That is why the Brahmins and Rajputs landlords liberally donated towards education. Besides caste association the other important organization to emerge was the Bihar Landlords Association in 1878.

In Bihar it was the upper caste who had the resources to participate in colonial society. Hence competition for securing the benefits of available opportunities in this period was confined to the upper castes. As mentioned earlier, Kayasthas, due to their traditional background

had taken to modern education.⁷ Being the most literate castes, they were first to organize themselves. In 1894, the local branch of the 'All India Kayastha Mahasabha' was established in Bihar.⁸ It attracted most of the educated Kayasthas into its fold. It started organizing caste members and helping them to acquire English education. This encouraged Bhumihar to organize their own associations to advocate their interests. In 1899 'Bhumihar Brahmin Sabha' emerged as the strongest caste association, with its establishment there grew a series of Bhumihar Brahmin colleges, schools and hostels in various parts of the province. These institutions received liberal financial assistance from the big Bhumihar landlords. The existence of these organization encouraged considerable competition as the existence of both castes tried to reduce the influence of the other from public life.

By 1899, Maithil Brahmin, under the leadership of Darbhanga Maharaja and Rajputs under the leadership of few educated zamindars started their own caste associations. Muslim also formed their own association to take

7. Census of India, 1931 (Bihar & Orissa), p.262.

8. Carol, L., Kayastha Samachar -- From a Caste to the National Newspaper, IESMR (10) 1973, pp.280-92.

part in this scramble in 1899.

The programme of these caste associations can be summarised into three broad groups of activities:

- (i) To further the general interest of caste and particularly to guard its social status in the hierarchy from actual or potential attack by other castes.
- (ii) To raise funds to provide scholarship for the needy and deserving students of caste in order to spread of education among members of their castes.
- (iii) To regulate their certain customs of the caste by passing resolutions at annual meeting of the members of the associations.

The main basis for the emergence of these caste association was the need to secure maximum benefits from new opportunities, particularly by way of jobs. So their major effort was geared towards spread of education among caste members, they appealed to the rich caste members to assist this venture. From this emerged a network of educational institutes and hostels under the auspices of caste association. Sometime the institutes were named after

particular caste. For example - Bhumihaar Brahmin College of Muzaffarpur was founded by Langat Singh a leading Bhumihaar zamindar of this areas. Rich landlords started giving scholarships to the student belonging to their own caste to benefit from the available opportunities of higher education and gainful government employment. This sort of open encouragement through financial assistance oh otherwise became a characteristic feature of early public life of Bihar and it was not perceived to be communal in any sense.⁹

Further leaders of these caste associations tried to do away these customs and barriers which either hindered the pursuits of educated people or were source of division within caste. For example, prohibition of sea-travel was condemned by people like Sachidanand Sinha, a leader of Kayastha association. He himself didnot do the prescribed penance after returning from England.¹⁰

In fact the modern caste association bridged the gap between numerous sub-caste of caste. This was done by initiating matrimonial relationship between sub-castes.

9. Shashi Sekhar Jha, Political Elite in Bihar, pp.77-79.

10. Sachidanand Sinha, Some Eminent Bihar Contemporaries (Patna, 1944), p.16.

Sachidanand Sinha himself married a girl from another sub-caste of Kayastha.¹¹ Through the Kayastha association he tried to encourage other educated Kayastha youths to emulate his example.

Though the objective of caste associations was social in nature, they laid the ground for the transformation of social identity into a political one. The limited opportunities led to inter-caste competition which generated mutual discord and antagonism in course of time. Later on when politics emerged as an alternative source of power and prestige, this antagonism entered in political life and politics got charged with the phenomenon of casteism. Had there been more avenues for mobility perhaps caste would not have played a crucial role in politics.¹²

But in Bihar the caste associations could not become as powerful as the caste associations of other parts of the country, because the Bihari upper caste did not face any threat to their traditional dominance, whereas Nayers faced competition from numerous caste Hindus.

11. B.P. Sinha, Sachidanand Sinha (Biography) (New Delhi, 1969).

12. R. Roy, "Caste and Political Recruitment in Bihar", in R. Kothari (ed.), Caste in Indian Politics, p.237.

Syrian Christians and Irvanas. The competition was more intense in Travancore as the rate of literacy was very high, while in Bihar there was enormous illiteracy which reduced the possibility of any threat to the privileged groups of caste. Further, the caste association in Bihar did not provide a base for the national movement unlike Patidar Yuvak Mandal of Gujarat. Caste association of Bihar also did not have direct support of peasants unlike Patidar Yuvak Mandal. Moreover the leadership of caste associations was generally in the hands of educated landlords or government officials, who were as group loyal to British colonial rule, but in other parts of the country the landlords did not have a leading role in the caste association.

With the rise of political organizations, caste associations lost much of their vitality, yet casteism continued and became more pronounced. Although these caste association did not play any role in the national movement, these were very active in the movement for separate Bihar. The government service as well as other professions like law and teaching were dominated by Bengalis. The influence

of Bengalis in public life of Bihar was a great obstacle for the advancement of educated groups, particularly Kayasths. The Bengalis who dominated the service were often accused of using their influence in getting Bengalis into government jobs. The dominance of Bengali was resented by Kayasthas who were dependent for their livelihood and advancement upon professional and public services. It is not surprising therefore, that the idea of separate Bihar came from a Kayastha leader Sachidanand Sinha. The programmatic content of caste association was apparently social, but their main objective was upliftment of their respective castes. This attempt at raising and preserving the social status of particular castes was resented and resisted by other contenders. This in turn strengthened the sense of caste solidarity and hardened the inter-caste antagonism when politics emerged as another field for power and prestige in early decades of twentieth century. It was this inter-caste rivalry which was transferred into political sphere. Thus, the social identity was transformed into political identity which sustained casteism.

The caste association of upper castes lost their importance after the emergence of Congress politics, but informal caste groupings developed inside the Congress. The election of various bodies gave strength to caste based politics. As Congress acquired power at the Municipal and District level and the Provincial level, there was scramble for power and position in which the caste support became the main source of power.

In the beginning the Indian National Congress was perceived as a mass movement than a political party. It offered public stature through joint struggle against the British Raj, but it did not offer immediate opportunities for material gains. That is why in course of the movement, the caste factor tended to become insignificant. But when the Congress entered in electoral politics the situation changed. With gradual acquisition of authority Congress became a source of power and prestige. Individuals started clamouring for preponderance inside the organization as well as outside. This revived caste loyalties and became the most effective mobilizer in the context of the backward social economic conditions. The operation of caste and casteism was strikingly evident in the Congress

Table- IV

CASTE COMPOSITION OF THE BIHAR PRADESH CONGRESS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 1934-1960¹³

Caste	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1942	1946
<u>Upper Castes:</u>									
Brahmin	- -	- -	- -	- -	7.15	- -	13.34	14.28	6.66
Bhumihar	15.38	35.72	23.07	23.53	7.15	13.34	13.34	21.43	20.00
Rajput	7.70	14.28	23.09	17.63	21.42	26.69	26.67	28.58	26.68
Kayastha	53.84	28.53	29.41	23.53	35.70	26.67	6.66	7.15	20.00
<u>Sub-Total</u>	76.92	78.57	75.66	64.69	69.27	66.68	60.01	71.44	73.34
<u>Others</u>									
Lower Castes:			7.70	5.88					
Scheduled Caste:							6.66	7.15	
Scheduled Tribes:						6.66			
<u>Sub-Total</u>			7.70	5.88		6.66	6.66	7.15	
Muslims	23.08	14.28	15.38	11.77	14.28	20.00	26.67	21.41	20.00
Not known others	- -	7.15	7.70	11.76	14.30	6.66	6.66	6.66	
TOTAL	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

13. R. Roy, "A Study of the Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee, Bihar", (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation); quoted in "Caste and Political Recruitments in Bihar", R. Kothari (ed.), Caste in Indian Politics.

CASTE COMPOSITION OF THE BIHAR PRADESH CONGRESS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 1934-1960

Caste	1947	1948	1950	1952	1954	1955	1958	1960
Upper Castes:								
Brahmin	7.15	9.52	12.50	21.05	10.53	15.00	14.28	14.29
Bhumihar	14.28	14.29	12.50	21.05	21.05	20.00	23.81	28.56
Rajput	35.71	23.82	27.50	26.33	21.05	20.00	19.15	14.29
Kayastha	21.43	14.29	12.50	5.26	5.26	5.00	9.53	9.76
Sub-Total:	78.59	61.92	75.00	73.69	57.89	60.00	66.67	61.90
Others								
Lower Castes:		19.04	12.50	10.53	21.05	20.00	14.28	14.29
Scheduled Castes:		4.76	6.25	5.26	5.26	5.00	4.76	4.76
Scheduled Tribes:	7.15	9.76	- -	5.26	5.26	- -	- -	- -
Sub-Total:	7.15	28.56	18.75	21.05	31.57	25.00	19.04	19.05
Muslims	19.28	9.52	6.25	5.26	5.26	5.00	9.53	14.23
Not known others	- -	- -	- -	- -	5.26	10.00	4.76	4.76
TOTAL:	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

organization in Bihar and particularly in the Bihar Pradesh Congress Executive Committee.

From the Table- IV, it emerges that in 1934 the Kayasthas controlled 54 per cent of the seats in the executive committee, while in 1960 they occupied only 5 per cent of seats. The Kayasthas constituted less than 2 per cent of the total population of the State, yet they were in the forefront of the political scene of the State because they were first to acquire English education and to be incorporated into modern political. Kayasthas supremacy was challenged by Bhumihars in the course of the national movement. Bhumihars held 35 per cent seats in 1935. During the national movement Brahmins were also quite active in the Congress and generally they began to acquire important positions in organizations. Below the Brahmins in the political hierarchy were the backward castes who succeeded in breaking the social barriers and effecting an entry into the political realm, thus overcoming many difficulties in their path of upward social mobility. But this is attributed by and large to the levelling effect of democratic politics and the compulsions of such politics.

The above narrative indicates that upper castes do not form a single cohesive group. On the contrary each unit of the upper caste is a serious contender for political power. In other words the political rivalry among upper caste has been the main deriving force behind politics in Bihar during this period. It is among the upper castes that a major portion of political rewards measured in terms of political leadership is distributed. This can be clearly noticed from the political activities and conflicts at the time of the elections to the Bihar legislative assembly in 1937.

In the 1937 election, the Congress secured a majority and formed the government. But the entire electoral process in the Congress seemed to suggest that Congressmen were essentially occupied with their own interests and of their castes. Caste affiliations were central to the entire election. candidates openly appealed to their fellow castemen to vote for them regardless of any other reasons and some of election results were decided by a solid caste votes.

Writing about the development in the provincial Congress, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who was the Chairman of PCC observed that: "We had to consider the caste of a person while deciding about the candidature. It was not a matter of satisfaction for Congress. But due to the exigencies of situation we could not avoid it. It was a matter of great shame and sadness that we could not forget caste. We had to think that if we do not choose a man of particular castes from a particular area it would have adverse effect on that particular caste and ultimately on the chances of success in election. Further we had also taken people from all castes in proportionate number, so that we can please all the castes. This was not a happy situation for a nationalist organization, but we had to do it."¹⁴

The Provincial Congress Working Committee and Rajendra Prasad had to face protests from almost every constituency over the choice of candidates. Most of the time this protest was motivated by caste considerations. The major difference over selection of candidate arose between Sahajanand Saraswati and Congress working

14. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Autobiography (1957), p.555.

Committee, when two of his candidates belonging to his own caste did not get the constituencies of their choice.

Casteism showed its face more vigorously and openly when local leader from Bhabhua complained to Dr. Rajendra Prasad that local Brahmins mischievously charged a particular nominee of being casteist. In his view the crux of the matter was that the nominee belonged to Kayastha community and the Brahmins who were dominating the area did not like a Kayastha representing them.¹⁵

There were instances in which some influential people opposed to the Congress and leaders of certain caste-groups cooperated with Congress in order to ~~understand~~^{erode} the influence of a rival caste. For instance Sir Ganesh Dutt Singh, a landlord Bhumihar leader, a staunch loyalist and an opponent of the Congress was prepared to work with Congress. He wanted to destroy the influence of Kayasthas, who had dominated education and jobs and were quite strong in political life also. Sir Ganesh Dutt Singh was ready to cooperate if it served his purpose.¹⁶

15. Letter to Dr. Rajendra Prasad from a local leader of Bhabhua (dated 9 November 1936) Rajendra Prasad Private Letters).

16. Anugrah Narayan Sinha, Mere Samagamran (Hindi) (1961), p.82.

Further more, in some instances the Congressmen in District boards and the Council were supporting their prosperous and influential non-Congress caste members in election to the official bodies. This led Ram Briksha Benipuri, a powerful Hindi novelist to protest against the selection of such people. But these protests had no impact on Congress leadership which was helpless before caste lobbies inside the organization.

So the election of 1936-37 provided an occasion of grabbing power and distributing rewards. Caste affiliations became prominent and appeared necessary at the time of election. For many years Bihar Congress remained divided into two main groups under the leadership of S.K. Sinha (Bhumihars) and A.N. Sinha (Rajput). The two main divisions on the basis of two castes, Bhumihars and Rajputs remained effective till their death. In time the caste equation changed and other caste groups replaced these two caste formations. And thus casteism entered every walk of life, given the pivotal

role of the political process in this province. Caste equation again became crucial when the question of chief ministership of the interim ministry (1946) came before the provincial congress.¹⁷ Independence meant more opportunities and more power for these leaders through which they could distribute rewards to their allies mostly caste-members.

The foregoing analyses indicates that caste emerged in the politics of Bihar only in the first decade of the twentieth century, when the movement for Bihar's separation was launched. The politics in the pre-independence period of Bihar was monopolised by the upper caste because of their economic position and educational advancement. The Kayasthas being the most educated took the government jobs first and dominated in administration. But soon they were challenged by other upper castes, because they started to compete

17. M.A.Kalam Azad, India Wins Freedom (Bombay), pp.113-19.

with them. The Indian National Congress also could not escape from the casteism and informal groupings based on caste inside the Congress became operative. Caste became a major force in political life of Bihar, which was evident in 1937 provincial legislative assembly election. Thus during the pre-independence Bihar castes emerged as an important force in politics and gradually it started to influence the entire political process through various caste associations and the Congress Party and in due course became a guiding factor for political action in the State of Bihar.

Chapter II

CASTE AND FACTIONALISM — A PRE-COALITION
PERIOD (1947-67)

CASTE AND FACTIONALISM -- A PRE-COALITION
PERIOD (1947-67)

For two decades after independence, Bihar's political system was dominated by the Congress Party. It was a system in which a single party occupied the dominant position with the opposition parties acting as parties of pressure without providing an alternation of power.¹ The Congress was an open system described as an open umbrella which in order to maintain its dominant position brought into its fold a variety of social and economic interests.²

The present chapter will analyse how the caste based factions since independence were influenced the Congress Party in Bihar. The chapter examines how the different leaders of caste based factions formed alliances and counter-alliances to keep away the rival factions from the power structure of the State politics. The

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1. Rajni Kothari, "The Congress System in India", in his Party System and Election Studies (1967), pp. 1-18.
 2. Morris Jones, "Dominance and Dissent : Their Inter-Relationship in the Indian Party System", Government and Opposition, vol.I (1966), p.460.

study will also take into account the causes which enabled the backward castes, to emerge as a significant factor into the State politics, particularly after 1960. And, finally, what was the impact of this caste based factional politics on the 1969 general election ^{in Bihar} ~~which~~ the Congress was defeated in Bihar.

The Congress Party was established in 1908 in Bihar. It functioned until 1949 as an integrative force by bringing together diverse elements from different geographical and cultural regions. It submerged local and regional loyalties in an overwhelming national identity with national freedom as its primary objective.³

This is not intended to deny the existence of differences, tension and division in the Congress of the pre-independence days. Factional conflicts have always been a part of the Congress in pre as well as post independence period. It is to be noted that even before independence the Congress sometimes assumed dual

3. Ramashray Roy, "Intra-Party Conflict in the Bihar Congress", Asian Survey, 1 December 1966, pp. 707-08.

roles. In addition to being a movement against alien ruler, it acquired governmental power at different levels in the State. In the 1920's, the Congress first came to power at the municipal and district levels and in the thirties at the provincial level. Thus, while in office the party represented a power structure through which various interests could achieve their ends. This resulted in the emergence of factionalism, indiscipline and of parochial interests in the party. With the emergence of the Congress as a structure of power and with the prospect of political power becoming a reality, the aim of the organization became secondary to sectional or personal goals. A relentless pursuit for capturing the party organizations and through it the ministerial position by forging coalition of castes became a common practice. Caste affiliation of a leader became a prominent factor and his ability to exercise considerable sway upon his casteman, a hallmark of political sagacity and competition in the Congress Party in Bihar.

After independence, factionalism increased sharply as the Congress as a political party was dependent on votes as an essential condition for remaining in power, which made it all the more essential to seek support from

diverse social-economic groups of society. This resulted in a situation in which intra-factional competition and conflict became significant for the political process making the Congress Party a highly competitive system, which must tolerate internal conflict and acquiescence to factional demands in order to prevent them from colliding with party's grand design for power.

Once personal ambitions and fulfilment of sectarian interests were accepted as legitimate goals the formation of factions became an accepted platform of organization. Conflicting claims and counter-claims acted as catalysts. The process of factionalization of the party began regional loyalties, caste consideration, diverse economic interest and personal ambition all provided bases for the formation of factions.⁴

Caste distinctions were the most important factor for mobilizing political support. Political rivalry among the upper castes and as a result, the gradual involvement

4. Ramshray Roy, "Politics of Fragmentation : The Case of the Congress Party in Bihar", in Iqbal Narain (ed.), State Politics in India (1967), p.418.

of other caste groups in Congress politics is a characteristic feature of politics in Bihar. In the early years the Congress leadership came from the Kayastha who had received English education earlier in larger number as compared to other castes. But their dominance challenged by the Bhumihars, who were more numerous and economically more influential. The rising aspirations of Bhumihars brought home to the Kayasthas the fear of dislodgement from the position of power. So they responded to this threat by entering into an alliance with yet another emerging caste, the Rajputs.⁵ Alliances led to counter alliances, the leading castes co-opted men from politically inarticulate castes to position of second rank leadership in an obvious bid to consolidate their own positions. This brought more and more castes into the vortex of politics.

It is important to see here the impact of independence and universal suffrage on the social and political interaction of the twice born castes and upper backward castes (Yadavs, Kurmis and Koiris), in Bihar. Between 1947 to 1963 Congress leadership was controlled

5. Chetkar Jha, "Caste in Bihar Politics", in Iqbal Narain (ed.), op.cit., pp.575-87.

by members drawn from the upper castes of Brahmins, Rajputs and Bhumihars. They mobilized people in the villages to deliver the votes in favour of the Congress. But despite rivalries between caste based factions of the party, the upper castes possessed sufficient cohesion to maintain their overall dominance and prevented Yadav and Kurmi politicians from emerging as independent leaders in their own right. Moreover the upper caste leaders of the ruling Congress Party made every effort to ensure that a separate political organization of the backward classes could not succeed. Efforts by members of the backward classes federation to form their own party were frustrated by the Congress use of patronage to co-opt Yadava and Kurmi elites. It provided a new opportunities for ambitious Yadava and Kurmi leaders to assert their influence as caste mobilizers in localities where their own groups were numerically dominant without overturning the overall predominance of the forward castes of the district and State level.

Just as the implementation of universal suffrage widened the competition for political power to include leading members of the numerically strong upper backwards,

zamindari abolition improved the relative economic position of larger occupancy tenants, some of whom were drawn from the Kurmi, Koiri and Yadav castes. Land reforms significantly reduced the concentration of land-ownership in the largest size groups of fifty acres or more, leaving some resident ex-zamindars with reduced estates that narrowed their economic advantage over the most substantial occupancy tenants. The greatest beneficiaries of the redistribution of land were the Yadavas and Kurmis. They showed more receptivity to the new economic opportunities and were able to adopt new methods of farming.

However, the number of rising kulaks was too small and their resources too meagre to significantly alter the pattern of extreme inequality characteristic of the agrarian structure.⁶ Ownership of large holding moreover, were still disproportionately vested in the upper caste households, who were more concerned with renewing their prestige by cultivating through share-croppers or hired labourers than maximising productivity

6. Francine Frankel, Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar : Changing Pattern of Socio-Economic Conflict Between the Forward and Backward Castes — A Case Study.

and profits from commercial farming. The negative impact on agricultural production of the social and economic structure was reflected in a very low growth rates for major food crops, at a time when population growth reached about two per cent per annum.

But zamindari abolition nevertheless had one important unintended impact, which weakened the hegemony of the 'twice born' castes. Land reforms struck at the social prestige of the upper castes by denying small and petty ex-zamindars the right to collect rent from tenant cultivators. Brahmins at the apex of social structure, were most vulnerable to this type of status loss. Further more occupancy tenants enjoyed virtually the same rights in their holdings as the ex-intermediaries and paid rent to the State instead of 'tribute' to the landlords; the twice born castes found it difficult to assert the subordination of economic rank to ritual status. They greatfully acknowledged a new situation in which landed Sudra castes gained in social prestige as well as economic power. Moreover in villages where Kurmis and Yadava enjoyed numerical superiority, the introduction of universal suffrage made it possible for

candidates from the lower castes to displace traditional upper caste leaders through local and State elections. Thus the ritual hierarchy in Bihar slowly began to diverge at its apex from the social hierarchy of economic rank and political power.

Thus with these social-economic changes ~~there~~ there was an enlarging circle of political competition in Bihar. The entrenched upper castes sought to secure the support of the less politically conscious lower caste groups through the process of co-optation as a political strategy.

The two sub-coalitions, dominated by the Rajputs and Bhumihars however continued to function in the Bihar Congress until 1946. But soon after the formation of Congress ministry in 1946 defection from ruling group started and got accelerated in 1952. Further the formation of new ministry disappointed some of non-Bhumihar supporters of S.K. Sinha, who expected rewards with the ministerial gains because of their support to the Bhumihar chief minister. Sarangdar Singh, a Rajput was particularly confident of being picked up as minister was disappointed.⁷

7. A.N. Sinha, Mere Samaswaran (Hindi) (Kushum Prakashan, 1961), p.319.

The formation of the Congress ministry in 1952 gave a further shock to the supporter of S.K. Sinha and accelerated the process of defection. This was one of the important factors prompting the inclusion of Mahesh Prasad Sinha, a Bhumihar and a close relation of S.K. Sinha in the ministry. M.P. Sinha's rise ^{to} power made K.B. Sahay lieutenant of S.K. Sinha, whom the latter had earlier weaned away from the Rajput Kayastha alliance and who aspired to be chief minister, apprehensive of the intentions of the chief minister. It quickened the alienation of the non-Brahmins who had been passed over from ministerial position in 1946 and 1952. M.P. Sinha denigrated K.B. Sahay and the non-Bhumihar favourites of the chief minister and replacing them with persons from his own caste.⁸ M.P. Sinha and K.B. Sahay rivalry intensified caste rivalry.

By 1953 the bifactional structure of the Congress Party in Bihar ended, when almost all the important non-Bhumihar supporters of the chief minister S.K. Sinha deserted his camp and formed a centrist group. This group

8. A.N. Sinha, op.cit., p.437.

blamed M.P. Sinha, for their grievances.⁹ However, it is interesting to note that Bhumihar supporters of the chief minister by and large stuck to him even in cases when they failed to be rewarded by ministerial positions. Presumably the reason was the psychological satisfaction that they derived from belonging to the ruling caste.¹⁰ The revolt of the centrist group was directed against the ruling Bhumihar factions. This group, apart from impressing upon the Congress High Command the need for taking action against the Bhumihars leaders was busy in creating public opinion against them. The group further provided a forum for other disgruntled elements, both within and outside the party, for criticising the Congress leadership. The rivalry between M.P. Sinha and K.B. Sahay affected the Congress Party's activities ranging from organizational elections to the 1967 general election.

But after 1957 election for the first time in the history of the Bihar Congress a contest for leadership of the Congress legislature party took place between

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9. Ramshray Roy, "Politics of Fragmentation : The Case of Congress Party in Bihar", in Iqbal Narain (ed.), op.cit., p.422.
10. M.P. Singh, Cohesion in a Predominant Party : The Pradesh Congress and Party Politics in Bihar, p.62.

the old rivals S.K. Sinha and A.N. Sinha. K.B. Sahay openly aligned with the Rajput group along with the remnants of the centrist group.¹¹ However, A.N. Sinha lost as the supporters of Sahay deserted him.

Further, the death of A.N. Sinha in July 1957 left his group without a recognized leader capable of winning support from other communities. Consequently, the Rajput group under the stewardship of S.N. Sinha, son of A.N. Sinha was reduced simply to a caste faction. The other caste elements of Rajput groups were organised under the leadership of B.N. Jha, a Brahmin and a camp follower of A.N. Sinha.¹² Thus bifactional structure of the State Congress was changed into a multi-factional structure.

Once again the death of S.K. Sinha in January 1961 changed the balance of factional forces. The ruling Bhumihar sub-coalition under the leadership of the M.P. Sinha lost to a new sub-coalition of Brahmin-Rajput-Kayastha alongwith majority of lower castes,

11. Ramashray Roy, Dynamics of One Party Dominance in Indian State, p.554.

12. Shree Nagesh Jha, "Caste in Bihar Politics", Economic and Political Weekly, February 1978, p.343.

scheduled castes and tribes and Muslims under the leadership of the B.N. Jha.¹³ So as the leader of the majority group B.N. Jha became the second chief minister of Bihar.

However, at this time another important factor which profoundly affected group alignments was the growing pressure from backward castes for a share in the formal institutional structures. The sudden rise in lower caste members in Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee resulted in the gradual decline of dominance of the upper castes.¹⁴ In the legislative assembly also the backward castes including the scheduled castes and tribes emerged as the most crucial group.

13. Shree Chetkar Jha, "Caste in Bihar Politics", in Iqbal Narain (ed.), State Politics in India, op.cit., p.5079.

14. Ramashray Roy, "Caste and Political Recruitment in Bihar", in R. Kothari (ed.), Caste in Indian Politics (1970).

Table- I

SHOWING CASTE-WISE PERCENTAGE OF CONGRESS PARTY MEMBERS
IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN 1957 AND 1962 ¹⁵

Caste	1957		1962	
	No.	%	No.	%
Brahmins	20	9.54	26	12.74
Bhumihars	34	16.19	24	11.77
Rajputs	30	14.28	27	13.23
Kayasthas	8	4.28	11	5.38
Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes	37	17.62	56	27.96
Backward Castes †	48	22.86	45	22.06
Muslims	24	11.43	15	7.35
Others	8	11.43	15	7.35
TOTAL:	210	100.00	204	100.00

From the table it emerges that the percentage of backward caste including the scheduled castes and tribes

15. Shree Nagesh Jha, op.cit., p.344; also Chetkar Jha, op.cit., p.583.

increased from 39.48 per cent in 1957 to 49.53 per cent in 1962 in the Bihar assembly. The representation of Brahmin also increased from 9.54 to 12.74 per cent in 1962. A new caste coalition of Brahmin and backward caste was perhaps the result of this development, which helped B.N. Jha in defeating M.P. Sinha in the chief ministership contest.

Thus the post 1957 factional rivalry included a new sub-coalition consisting of Brahmins, who were earlier camp follower S.K. Sinha with the exception of B.N. Jha and lower castes. However under the Kamaraj Plan the chief minister B.N. Jha resigned in October 1963. This caused a new alignment of factions. S.N. Sinha and his followers deserted the Jha camp and joined Sahay-M.P. Sinha sub-coalition of Bhumiher and Kayastha. With this new sub-coalition of Rajputs, Bhumiher and Kayasthas alongwith majority of backward castes, scheduled castes and tribes members, it was possible for this group to defeat Birchand Patel a backward caste lieutenant of B.N. Jha in the contest for leadership of the Congress legislative party. K.B. Sahay

now as the leader of the sub-coalition was thus able to fulfil his long cherished ambition of becoming the chief minister of Bihar.

But K.B. Sahay aware of his limitations as leader of the numerically smaller Kayastha caste compared to other Brahmins, Bhumihar and Rajput groups began to woo the numerically stronger backward communities by promising greater political share for them in the party as well as in the government and promoted their members to position of leadership in a bid to create a viable support in the Congress Party. For example, he appointed Ram Laxhan Singh Yadav an important Yadav caste politician a cabinet minister in his government and gave him the portfolio of Public Works Department (PWD). K.B. Sahay also won over the influential Kurmi leader Deo Saran Singh, the chairman of the Vidhan Parishad. This strategy of K.B. Sahay, which mainly aimed at weakening the power position of the other leaders accelerated internal fighting within the sub-coalition. The coming 1967 general election sharpened it. Further in the formation of Pradesh Election Committee (PEC) in June 1966, M.P. Sinha an important member and leader of the Bhumihar group

defeated the Jha group. However, K.B. Sahay succeeded in keeping the ministerial list in tact by retaining the support of a section of the Bhumihaar group led by Shiv Shankar Sinha.¹⁶

Thus, proliferation of factions was an important hallmark of the Congress Party in Bihar. In the course of the 20 years the bipolarity of factionalism transformed into multi-polarity where each caste faction got exclusive or major support from other caste group or group of castes. In this way power in the Congress Party was distributed among several caste based factions.

Interestingly, these political conflicts and intra-factional struggle to control the dominant Congress Party did not originate on the basis of any differences in ideology and programmes, rather caste unities and differences were the crucial dividing force behind factional politics in the Bihar Congress. Economic, regional and geographical differences might have contributed to divisions between congressmen but

16. M.P. Singh, op.cit., p.65.

they did not matter as much as caste differences in the organization of political groups.

However, it is important to note that these differences were fully exploited by self serving politicians for the fulfilment of their own political ambitions. The lack of ideology in factional alliances and frequency with which individuals moved from one group to another group was sufficient proof that politicians were guided more by personal interests than by group commitment. This is borne out by the fact that out of the total 30 prominent Congress leaders in Bihar changed side twice during the period of 20 years. The personal basis of factions has been also observed by Ghanshyam Singh Gupta, a special representative of the AICC; there are two groups in the Bihar State Congress organization -- one of Shri S.K. Sinha and the other of Shri A.N. Sinha. The difference between them do not lie in any marked degree of their political policies and programmes or even in their outlook or approach to them. It is personal. The virus is more pronounced amongst those who claim to follow them.¹⁷

17. Report of the Ghanshyam Singh Gupta on Bihar Congress Affairs to the AICC Session of 1952, quoted in R. Roy, "Politics of Fragmentation", in Iqbal Narain, op.cit., (1967).

Thus the Congress Party during the period of 1947-67 was dominated by upper caste despite the numerical superiority of the lower castes in the State. The reason lay in the earlier political mobilization of the economically well off and educationally advanced upper castes through various caste association and Congress Party.

One of the important point to be noted here ~~was~~ that the upper castes undoubtedly dominated and controlled the Congress leadership until 1967 general election, but some time after independence, the upper caste political elites were forced by increasing competition to broaden their support through recruiting members from lower castes and raising them to the elite status, who later on became leader in their own right. After 1957 election and particularly of 1962 election, the upper caste leaders very well realised that it is not any more possible for them to prevent the emergence of backward castes as an important force in State politics. This was a very significant feature of Bihar politics and particularly Congress Party in Bihar. All this widened

the circle of political participation to include the emerging castes which formed as reservoir of support for contending upper caste groups.

The cumulative result of this factional balkinization was that the cohesion and organizational viability of the Congress was seriously weakened by the end of 1966. The accommodative and integrative capability of the Congress Party was exhausted and indiscipline and personal ambition of the factional leaders intensified. The caste based and personality oriented factions and infighting became worse and took an ugly shape at election time. The internal competition and bargaining between groups was to a great extent was responsible for the Congress debacle in 1967 general election in Bihar. The factional leaders in their aspirations to become chief minister tried to defeat as many as Congress candidates as possible by supporting their rivals in the 1967 general elections. They were rather more concerned with reducing the strength of their rivals than those who were opposing Congress candidates. All this led to the defeat of the dominant Congress Party in the 1967 general election in Bihar.

Thus what is indicated by the foregoing account of factional politics in the Bihar Pradesh Congress Party during 1947-67 is that the Congress Party enjoyed a dominant position in Bihar with the inevitable result that competition among factions within this party assumed greater salience as compared to competition between opposing parties in the State.

Secondly, the proliferation of factions struggling to control the dominant Congress Party was not influenced by ideology or programmes, the driving force was caste and personal ambition. However factions within the Congress Party were not based on a single caste because, the factional leaders were forced to seek support across caste-lines since no single caste by itself enjoyed an absolute majority in the State. But the fact remains that until 1960 the support across caste lines was mainly within the so called upper castes. It was among upper castes that a major portion of political rewards in terms of political leadership was distributed. All chief minister during this period were from upper castes.

But by the time of 1957 election, a new trend was noticed, when there started to grow consciousness among backward castes. In this regard a new situation also helped these castes to come into power politics of the State, when the upper caste which constituted the effective elite of the Bihar Congress in the initial stage of political mobilization were forced by growing political competition among themselves to seek and mobilise additional bases of support. They did so by recruiting supporters from the lower castes. For example, Mr. B.N. Jha had to forge an alliance with the backward caste leaders in the legislature to keep himself in power. But it was K.B. Sahay who brought them to the centre of power, when he took three men from this community in the cabinet and allotted an important portfolio (PWD) to one of them Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav. Thus, there was a shift in the direction of greater participation by the backward caste elites in the politics of Bihar.

Chapter III

**CASTE AND COALITION GOVERNMENTS — THE
PHASE OF NON-CONGRESSISM**

CASTE AND COALITION GOVERNMENTS — THE
PHASE OF NON-CONGRESSISM

The Fourth General Election in 1967 introduced major changes in Indian politics. Most significantly it weakened the hold of the monolith Congress in a number of States. In Bihar the Congress was reduced to a minority status in the State assembly although it was still the largest single party in the legislature. On the eve of the 1967 general election the political trends in Bihar appeared to be hostile to the Congress Party. The key factor responsible for the rout of the Congress Party is to be found in the breakdown of the Congress organization itself and the consequent breach in the consensus represented by the Congress.¹ The formation of the Jan Kranti Dal (JKD) in Bihar was a major step in the slow disintegration of the Congress Party's all encompassing character. Caste based and personality oriented factions and infighting was the highlight of the Congress politics, but it became worse and took an ugly shape at the time of the election. The Bihar Congress

1. Rajni Kothari, "Congress and Consensus", Seminar, June 1967.

was divided into four factions in this period. These were led by the chief minister K.B. Sahey, the former chief minister B.N. Jha, the irrigation minister M.P. Sinha and the education minister S.N. Sinha. The intense competition and bargaining between groups was largely responsible for the Congress debacle in Bihar. All the four leaders aspiring to become chief minister after the election worked to defeat their rivals by supporting their rivals.² It appeared that each leader was more concerned with reducing the strength of his rival than with the defeat of those who were opposing Congress candidates. Even S.N. Sinha had to concede that it was not so much the opposition forces which have defeated the Congress as much as the factions inside the Congress itself.³ It was also said that Congress group leader provided financial assistance to opposition candidates in the constituencies ~~and~~ where they disapproved of Congress candidates. According to B.N. Jha, the party elections fund was used to sabotage

2. Paul R. Brass, "Coalition Politics in North India", The American Political Science Review, December 1968.

3. Haridwar Rai and J.L. Pandey, "Politics of Coalition Governments — The Experience of the First United Front Government in Bihar", Journal of the Constitutional and Parliament Studies, April-June 1972.

the election of the Congress candidates.⁴

The bitterness of factional politics increased to such an extent that the Pradesh Election Committee (PEC) could not recommend an agreed list of prospective candidate to the Central Election Committee (CEC). The manner in which the ECEC selected the candidate only made the situation worse. A little before the elections in 1966 the group led by Mahamaya Prasad Sinha and the Raja of Ramgarh rebelled against the dominant K.B. Sahay group. It left the Congress and formed a new party — the Jan Kranti Dal.⁵ The congressmen who were denied tickets had no interest in the electoral victory of their party. In fact they did every thing to defeat the official candidates. Many others disappointed at being refused the ticket deserted the party.⁶ This weakened the party and its capacity to organize a campaign in a coordinated and effective manner.

4. Indian Nation, 4 March 1967.

5. Mahamaya Prasad Sinha, Jab Main Mukhya Mantri tha (Arreb, Pustak Sadan, 1974), pp. 3-4.

6. Navneeth, "Congress Debacle in Bihar : Voting Pattern in 1967", Economic and Political Weekly, August 24, 1968, p.1311.

The unhealthy reliance on the politics of patronage centered around ministers, party managers and regional bosses led to a popular resentment which found expression in the election. Alienation of the people from the Congress Party and tendency to take them for granted was itself the result of an ⁱⁿadequate mass base of the party and its excessive reliance on internal networks of patronage. The party failed to maintain its traditional linkages with strategic sectors of population such as the minority communities, labourers, the youths and the students, the economically deprived castes in the villages and the lower middle classes in urban areas. All these at a time when the logic of economic development was leading to increasing hardships and an increasing sense of frustration. The dependence on patronage relationships and disunity contributed greatly to the fragmentation of the party at the time of election.

But inspite of all its crises and divisions, the Congress would not have performed so badly if the opposition groups or parties did not unite to fight the Congress. For the first time important opposition

parties showed the ability to forge a United Front against the Congress. In the forefront of non-congressism was the SSP leader Ram Manohar Lohia, who in an obvious bid to match the 'catch all' character of the Congress Party put forward the thesis of a 'catch all' opposition irrespective of ideologies and policies for the purpose of dislodging the Congress from power.⁷

In pursuance of this strategy, the SSP, the CPI, the CPI(M), the RSP, the Jharkhand Party and the Socialist Unity Centre (SUC) formed a united opposition front to make adjustments to avoid electoral contest themselves. This greatly reduced the multi-cornered contests which invariably benefitted the Congress.

Apart from these general factors, there were more immediate reasons which account for the defeat of the Congress. The economic situation in the country had deteriorated after the wars with China in 1962 and Pakistan in 1965. It was further aggravated in Bihar by wide-spread famine, and starvation. The prices of

7. Mahendra Prasad Singh, Cohesion in a Predominant Party : The Pradesh Congress and Party Politics in Bihar (Delhi: S.Chand & Co, 1975), p.70.

foodgrains and other essential commodities soared high. The government employees, particularly the non-gazetted launched an agitation for an increase in their dearness allowance. The newly formed united opposition front organised Bihar bandh on 9 August 1966. They staged demonstration throughout the State to express their public support to the employees. The demonstration in Patna in particular was so successful that it unnerved the government. As a result, three prominent opposition leaders -- Karpoori Thakur, Ramanand Tiwari and Chandra Sekhar Singh - were lathi-charged at public meetings in the Patna Gandhi maidan.

The students also launched a State wide agitation to expose the alleged 'cruelty', highhandedness, and the misdeeds of the government. This led to the closure of universities, colleges and schools throughout the State, which gave an opportunity to students to campaign against the Congress.⁸ On 8 January 1967, a largely attended convention of university teachers and

8. M.P. Singh, op.cit.,

students held at Muzaffarpur resolved to mobilize the students and teachers against the Congress in the ensuing election. The secondary school teachers association, which was already been under the influence of the CPI also joined the hands with the forces opposed to the Congress.⁹ Thus, on the eve of the elections dissatisfaction against the Congress was considerable. For the common people the Congress Party became a symbol of corruption, favouritism, inefficiency and repression.

The factions of the upper caste leadership inside the Bihar Congress Party also were to be blamed at least partially for the defeat of the Congress Party in Bihar. The backward caste leaders on the other hand were waiting to exploit the first available opportunity to maximize their advantages. Congress as a party had practically lost its grip over them because they were denied dominant positions in the organizational structure of the party. It was in this period that the defunct

9. Chetkar Jha, "Election Panorama in Bihar", Political Science Review, July-September and October-December 1967.

Triveni Sangh (a union of Yadav, Kurmi and Koiri) was revived. There was also the mushroom growth of caste sabhas around this period. Demand of 100 Congress Party tickets for backward castes by Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav also derived strength from this very background. The matter does not end here. Meetings were also held at the residence of R.L.S. Yadav in which a pledge was taken to support all backward caste candidates in the 1967 elections.¹⁰

Ramashray Roy has explained the rationale of new platform thus: "The dissatisfaction against the traditional social order led the unprivileged caste groups to seek the redress of their grievances through organised actions. If on the social plane, caste association succeeded in demolishing to a great extent, the barriers that divided similar status to this caste groups. It also projected on the political plane, a new identity, a new consciousness and a new orientation towards organised actions."¹¹ The changing

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10. See Jawharlal Pandey, "Politics of United Front in Bihar" (An unpublished Ph.D. dissertation) (Bhagalpur: Bhagalpur University).
11. Ramashray Roy, "Caste and Political Recruitment in Bihar", in R. Kothari (ed.), Caste in Indian Politics (New Delhi, 1970), p.238.

political situation in Bihar was also buttressed by the slogan of SSP, seeking for 60 per cent of the government jobs for backwards and the weaker sections of the society. The slogan prepared a background particularly for the SSP leader Karpoori Thakur to broaden his support base among the backward castes. At the same time for the reason cited above, the electorate in general were considerably disillusioned. The alternative given by the SVD (United Front) was more attractive.

It is against this background that the formation of the new United Front government is examined. Table- 1 shows the percentage of total votes and seats won by different political parties in the 1967 elections for the legislative assembly in Bihar.

From the Table- 1, it emerges that Congress Party suffered major reverses. It could secure only 128 out of 318 assembly seats. The Congress lost 30 seats in every elections but in 1967 it lost about 60 seats.¹²

12. The strength of the Congress Party in the assembly was falling steadily from 260 seats in the first general election to 210 in the second 185 in the third and finally 128 in the fourth general election. Link, 5 March 1969, p.24.

Table- I 13

Parties	Percentage of votes polled	Number of seats won
Congress Party	33.08	128
Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP)	17.62	68
Praja Socialist Party (PSP)	6.92	16
Jan Sangh	10.42	26
Communist Party of India (CPI)	6.91	24
CPI(M)	1.28	4
Swatantra	2.33	3
Jan Kranti Dal (JKD)	3.33	13
Republican Party of India (RSP)	0.18	1
Independents	17.88	33
TOTAL:	99.99	318

In terms of seat secured the most spectacular performance had been that of the SSP which increased its strength nearly ten times from seven in the outgoing assembly

13. "India Election Commission", Reports on the Fourth General Election in India, 1967, vol.II, (Statistical).

to 68 seats in the new one. The Jan Sangh which had only 3 seats secured 26 seats. The Communists doubled their strength from 12 to 28 seats (CPI- 24 and CPI-M 4). The rebel congressmen (JKD) bagged 26 seats. The PSP did not fare well, its strength was reduced from 28 to 18; while its leaders Basawan Singh and Suraj Narayan Singh lost the election. This was due to the merger of the big chunk of the former PSP workers under the leadership of Ramanand Tivari and Karpoori Thakur.¹⁴ The Swatantra Party suffered the greatest damage, it was reduced from 60 seats to only 3 seats in 1969. The major reason was the defection of the Raja of Ramgarh, Kamakhya Narain Singh to the Congress. The independents increased their strength from 12 to 20.

The most significant result of the election was the emergence of backward castes in the politics of the State. In the 1967 assembly elections as many as 71 MLAs were from the backward castes in the 324 member Bihar assembly. "The trend indicated the beginning of

14. Girish Mishra, "What Elections have Revealed", Mainstream, 11 March 1967, p.28.

a phase when the monopoly of the upper castes began to be challenged by those traditional structures which were denied access to power inspite of their larger numerical strength. They had been subjected to a continuous socio-political exploitations".¹⁵ Observed Ramashray Roy: "While upper castes used their traditional privileged position as a lever to become effective in the political realm. The non-privileged caste groups without the advantage of any social resources to save their numerical strength have necessarily to seek other avenues of upward mobility. Politics provided them with such a channel."¹⁶

However, the results of the election were indecisive. The Congress defeated, but no other party was in a position to form the government. Furthermore, neither a combination of left parties nor a combination of right parties was in a position to form the government, this led to considerable uncertainty and instability in the State. The governor called upon M.P. Sinha,

15. Jawaharlal Pandey, op.cit., pp. 79-81.

16. Ramashray Roy, op.cit., p.239.

leader of the Congress legislature party, which was the single largest party in the Assembly to form the ministry. But M.P. Sinha was unable to form the government because both B.N. Jha and S.N. Sinha refused to accept his leadership. Both wrote to the governor expressing their reservations about the new leader. This was revealed by the governor A.S. Ayangar himself.¹⁷

The internal differences in the Congress encouraged the opposition to stake their claim to provide an alternative non-Congress government. They did so by temporarily burying their differences and coalescing together. The SSP, the largest single non-Congress Party, in the assembly and also the most vocal exponent of non-congressism took the initiative in forming a non-Congress coalition. Bhupesh Gupta of the CPI and the Atal Bihari Bajpayee of Jan Sangh negotiated and helped considerably in the formation of the coalition.¹⁸ The United Front Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (SVD)

17. "A Governor Takes Leave", Commerce, 9 December 1967.

18. The Statesman (Calcutta), 28 February 1967.

comprising of the nine opposition parties and independents was formed on the basis of a 33 point minimum programme. Mohanaya Prasad Sinha (Chairman of the JKD) and Karpoori Thakur of the SSP were chosen leader and deputy leader of the coalition. However, a coalition government consisting of disparate political parties found it difficult to cooperate in governance. This was largely because of the uncompromising attitude of the Jan Sangh and the CPI and the hesitation of the PSP. Although the SSP, CPI and JKD formed a loose front to fight the elections, nevertheless were not quite prepared for sharing power. If it was difficult for CPI and SSP to share power, it was much harder for CPI and Jan Sangh which were ideologically opposed to each other and had contest elections against each other. But both parties appreciated the necessity of supporting efforts to sustain the coalition.

It was only the SSP, which under the leadership of Ram Manohar Lohia, had persistently called for such an alliance before and after the elections to defeat and remove the Congress from power. It therefore, needed no justification in joining the proposed coalition.

The party was entitled as the largest constituent to the leadership of the front. But it sacrificed even this to ensure the formation of the coalition government. The CPI(M) was also favourably disposed to a coalition making. It signed the programme and pledged all support to the new government but did not join it because of the inclusion of Jan Sangh as a full partner.¹⁹ As a matter of fact the leader of the Bihar unit of the CPI(M) as reported in the New Age was ready to join the ministry but at the last moment the general secretary of their party P. Sundaraya asked them to stay out of the government.²⁰ The Swatantra was ready to join any non-Congress government but because of its poor performance in the elections it had no significant say in the forming of the government. Nevertheless the Swatantra extends its support and cooperation.

The JKD on the other hand played an important role in the making of the ministry. Largely due to the shrewdness of the Raja of Ramgarh and Mahamaya Prasad Sinha.

19. The Indian Nation, 5 March 1967.

20. New Age, 12 March 1967, p.5.

JKD succeeded in snatching the leadership of the United Front from the SSP. Unlike the SSP, PSP was ambivalent about joining the government. But PSP eventually joined the government because it feared that otherwise it would be misunderstood as covert support for the Congress. This was noticed by the SSP leader who observed that PSP leaders thought that they would be no where if they went against the wishes of the people who wanted a non-Congress government. However, their attitude caused considerably delay in their joining the ministry.²¹

The non-Congress Parties thus joined together to form the first non-Congress SVD Government in Bihar in 1967. Much of the unity and cooperation was influenced by the pressure of public opinion which ostencibly wanted a non-Congress government. This dimension can be noticed in the response of the Jan Sangh minister who stressed that the coalition government will

21. The PSP joined the ministry on 15 March 1967, while the members belonging to other parties were sworn-in on 5 March 1967.

last because we all are afraid of this public opinion... No party will dare to take the blame of deserting the government.²² Moreover the party leader asserted that no compromise on basic principles was involved in the formation of the non-Congress coalition government, because all parties had agreed upon a minimum common programme which did not go against their ideologies. In fact Ram Manohar Lohia emphasised that non-Congress coalition government need not have a common political ideology and like mindedness rather it should be guided by a few common policies.²³ This was evident from the attitude of the CPI and Jan Sangh. They argued that people wanted an alternative to Congress, we prepared an agreed programme, keeping our respective ideologies apart, we decided to implement the programme.²⁴

With the exception of the ^{one} issue there was no substantial disagreement on any of the points in the 33 point minimum programme. Recognition of ^{Urdu} ~~Hindi~~ as the second official language of Bihar was the only issue on

22. Paul R. Brass, op.cit., p.1179.

23. Haridwar Rai and J.L. Pandey, op.cit., p.62.

24. Paul R. Brass, op.cit., p.1179.

which there was disagreement among the coalition partners. Several partners in the coalition government were committed to the inclusion of Urdu in the common programme.²⁵ The Jan Sangh leaders were prepared to make some concessions to encourage Urdu, but they were unwilling to declare it a second official language.²⁶ However, the inclusion of this point in the common programme did not prevent other parties from joining the coalition because the party leaders adopted a so called pragmatic and accommodative attitude in the formation of the coalition government.

The internal bickering in the Congress also encouraged the formation of the non-Congress coalition. The conflict between the various faction leaders on the issue of leadership greatly weakened the Congress. In this context the defeat of B.N. Jha in a way damaged the Congress because B.N. Jha ^{lost} ~~was~~ against M.P. Sinha who would have been in a stronger position to attract the JKD away from the opposition alliance. According to

25. Ibid., p.1180.

26. Ibid.

M.P. Sinha, B.N. Jha was to resign from the Congress a few days after the former's resignation, but subsequently he changed his mind. He had earlier counselled Mahamaya Prasad Sinha to resign from the Congress.²⁷ It was perhaps because of the close links with the JKD leaders that B.N. Jha has given his blessings to the Mahamaya ministry.²⁸ This became clear when five Congress defectors, who till the other day had been ardent supporters of B.N. Jha were made ministers in the Mahamaya's ministry. It might be because of his sympathetic attitude the United Front government did not constitute a Commission of enquiry against B.N. Jha and his group.

In March 1967, Bihar politics entered the second phase of coalition politics with the swearing in of the first non-Congress ministry headed by Mahamaya Prasad Sinha. It consisted of fourteen ministers; eleven cabinet ministers and three minister of states. Later

27. Mahamaya Prasad Sinha, *Jab main Mukhya Mantri tha*, op.cit., pp.2-3.

28. Subhash C. Kashyap, The Politics of Power (Delhi: National Publishing House, 1974), p.317.

four ministers of cabinet ranks and three minister of State were included which raised the strength of the ministry to twentyone.

Table- II

Showing Party-wise Breakup of the Coalition
Ministry as on March 5, 1967

Party	Cabinet Ministers	Minister of States	Total
JKD	3	1	4
SSP	4	-	4
CPI	2	1	3
Jan Sangh	2	1	3
Totals:	11	3	14

Party-wise Breakup after Expansion on 16 March 1962

JKD	3	1	4
SSP	6	2	8
CPI	2	1	3
Jan Sangh	2	1	3
PSP	2	1	3
Totals:	15	6	21

Sources: The Indian Nation, March 6 & 17, 1967.

The selection of ministers was a difficult task. The individual constituents had to take into account conflicting claims of seniority, caste, region and political expediency in deciding about their representation in the ministry. For example SSP wanted to accommodate a woman, a Harijan and an Adivasi as a minister, besides giving weightage to backward communities. But they were not quite successful in doing so. The selection of the nominees of the Jan Sangh, the CPI and the PSP posed no great problem because they were relatively more disciplined parties. The PSP however, had some initial difficulty in the selection of its nominees, but it succeeded in overcoming it because of the successful efforts made by the national leaders of the party.

It is significant that the leader of the United Front had to leave the selection of ministers to the partners of the coalition. This was because the leaders position was weakened by the hard political bargaining. Initially some sort of ratio was fixed

for the selection of ministers, though it was not followed practice. After few months the ratio was completely ignored in view of constant threat to the stability of the government. The expansion of the ministry then became a convenient instrument for accommodating defectors. Apart from the selection of ministers, the chief minister had no say at all in the allocation of portfolios. The chief minister conceded the preferences of all the cabinet ministers. For example, Finance and Education went to Karpoori Thakur, Electricity and Irrigation to Chander Sekhar Singh and Revenue to Indradeep Sinha in accordance of their wishes. He had to allocate Agriculture and Cooperative to Jan Sangh ministers. Karpoori Thakur along with some SSP leaders tried hard that police (General) Department should be given to Ramanand Tivari. The Chief Minister resisted for some time on the plea that he was directly responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the State. But ultimately he had to yield to the pressure. The ministry had to face a mini crisis caused by the distribution of portfolios. The above mentioned ministers urged the Chief Minister that

Raja of Ramgarh should not be allotted the Department of Mines and Minerals. But the Raja threatened that he would resign from the ministership and withdrew support unless he was given those same departments and his younger brother the Departments of Forests. The crisis was averted when he and his brother was given the said departments.

The table- III will give the picture of caste/community/rural/urban base of first United Front Government.

Table- III²⁹

Region/Name	Caste/ Community	Rural/ Urban	Constituency
CABINET MINISTERS:			
<u>North Plains:</u>			
Karpoori Thakur (SSP)	Nayee	Rural	Tajpur (Dharbhanga)
Kamakhya Narain Singh (JKD)	Rajput	Rural	Jalaipur (Sevan)
Chander Sekhar Singh (CPI)	Bhunihar	Urban	Barauni (Monghyr)

29. "Name and Membership of the Ministers", Indian Nation, 6 & 17 March 1967; and "Caste of Ministers and Constituency", Supra, ch.III.

Bindeshwari Prasad Mandal (SSP)	Yadav	Rural	Madhepura
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Hosibur Rahman (SSP)	Muslim	Rural	Amour
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South Plains:

Mohamaya Prasad Singh (JKD)	Kayastha	Urban	Patna (West)
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Ramanand Tiwari (SSP)	Brahmin	Rural	Shahpur (Shehabad)
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Vijay Kumar Mitra (Jan Sangh)	Behari- Bengali	Urban	Bhagalpur
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Ram Deo Mahto (Jan Sangh)	Koiri	Urban	Patna (East)
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Kapildeo Singh (SSP)	Bhumihar	Rural	Barniya (Monghyr)
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Shri Krishna Singh (SSP)	Rajput	Rural	Chakai (Monghyr)
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Chotanagpur:

Basant Narain Singh (JKD)	Rajput	Urban	Hazaribagh
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Region not known:

Indradeep Sinha (CPI)	Bhumihar	-	-
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Basawan Singh (PSP)	Bhumihar	-	-
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Bhola Prasad Singh (SSP)	Kurmi	-	-
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MINISTER OF STATES:

Tej Narayan Jha (CPI)	Maithil Brahmin	Rural	Benipatti (Dharbhanga)
Ramapati Singh (PSP)	Rajput	Rural	Saran
Mahabir Paswan (JKD)	Dusadh (SC)	Rural	Punpun
Upendra Nath Verma (SSP)	Koiri	Rural	Konch (Gaya)
Rudra Pratap Sarangi (Jan Sangh)	Brahmin	Rural	Sarsikda (Singhbhum)

With regard to the caste composition of the first United Front ministry, it is important to note that Forward Castes were in the majority. Out of total 39 ministers in the Council 16 belonged to the forward castes, 10 to backward castes, 4^{to} the scheduled castes and the remaining three were Muslims. One was an independent, while another one was a non-party man.

However, it is important to note that the coalition government in Bihar was the first experiment in multi-party cooperation. For the first time Jan Sangh

at one extreme and Communist Party on the other have agreed to work together in the administration.

But immediately after coming into power, the biggest problem that the ministry faced was of drought. The other problems were of government's own creation. They stemmed from promises made lightly when the United Front had no hope of coming into power. For example the non-gazetted employees had already addressed an open letter to the cabinet that they have been living on promises for too long and there was no more waiting for them in the matter of Dearness Allowance on par with central government employees. Teachers of all grade demanded revision of pay scales and students too were looking for more and more amenities. Law and order continue to deteriorate, because the lower ranks in the magistracy and police believe that firm action would lead to mass demonstration to which the crowds and their leaders have become adopt after repeated bands. The magistracy and police were appeared to be playing it safe for themselves by 'going slow' with the public on

30. The Statesman, 26 April 1967.

the one side and the government on the other and in the process serving neither.³¹

Another problem which the United Front had to face was the language riot at Ranchi. In fact the entire language problem in Bihar was the creation of the ministry, especially of the Deputy Chief Minister Karpoori Thakur, whose immature and short-sighted handling of the Urdu issue created communal tension all over the State.³² Karpoori Thakur was keen to buy political support of the Muslims by promising to make Urdu the second official language in Bihar.

So the first non-Congress United Front Government which came to power with a lot of fanfare, could not remain in power even for a year. After remaining in office for 10 months and twenty days it was voted out of power by a no confidence motion moved by the Congress Shoshit Dal alliance. Four floor crossings were witnessed on the day the United Front was voted out of power. Defections, intra-party divisions, desertation

31. The Statesman (Delhi), 26 April 1967.

32. The Searchlight (Patna), 28 August 1967.

and clash of interests among the constituents of the United Front and finally the cynical designs and activities of the Congress Party brought down the first ever non-Congress Government.

Defection and redefections played an important role in the downfall of the United Front government in Bihar. Bindeswari Prasad Mandal, Health Minister of the coalition government alongwith 25 supporters formed the defectors party called the Shoshit Dal.³³ B.P. Mandal had been subjected to pressure by the central leadership of his party to give up the ministerial post and join parliament. When it became clear that the SSP was not prepared to accommodate him in the State Legislature, B.P. Mandal and his supporters formed a new group without resigning from the ministry.³⁴ The Shoshit Dal formed an alliance with the Congress Party to topple the United Front government. The United Front leaders on their part were promising ministerahips to Congress leaders to defect to the United Front.³⁵ Thus

33. Subash C. Kashyap, op.cit., p.314; Link, 3 September 1967, p.14.

34. The Indian Nation, 27 August 1967.

35. Subash C. Kashyap, op.cit., p.317.

defections, counter-defections and redefections made the political atmosphere of the State highly uncertain. In the midst of this confusion it is not surprising that the UF was in power for only eleven months. The Congress Party succeeded in bringing down the UF government largely through defections.

The Congress leaders decided to topple the coalition government in order to forestall the inquiry into the charges of corruption against the previous Congress ministers. The new government had appointed an enquiry commission headed by Justice Iyer to probe into the ^{charges} ~~charges~~ of corruption and misuse of the power by the former Chief Minister and five of his colleagues. Congress effort to remove the UF government was greatly aided by B.P. Mandal. The Congress Party formed an alliance with Shoshit Dal and accepted an offer from B.P. Mandal to form a coalition ministry under his leadership. The Congress-Shoshit Dal coalition was a matter of strategy and no question of principle was involved in it.³⁶ Ashok Mehta (the Union

36. "Gulzarilal Nanda made the Statement",
The Searchlight, 19 September 1967.

Minister of Petroleum and Chemical) supported Congress Shoshit Dal alliance to topple down the UF government in Bihar. He said Congress is in opposition and it is the inherent right of the opposition to topple down the existing government in alliance with other like minded parties. He said this is the whole dynamics of democracy and there is no element of surprise in the process.³⁷

Besides the UF government was by its very nature transitional, it was a post-election governmental coalition. The parties constituting the UF did not fight the election unitedly and had not on any occasion expressed willingness to work together in a coalition if voted to power. After the election opposition parties made a hurried front to ward off the Congress from assuming power. It was not a two party coalition government like the Congress-BKD coalition in UP; the Swatantra and Jan Sangh coalition in Orissa; Akali and Jan-Congress coalition in Punjab, rather it was a multi-party coalition which was ideologically disparate

37. Ibid., 5 October 1967.

and heterogeneous.³⁸ It was composed of parties like CPI, CPI-(M), and SSP on the one hand and the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra on the other. In addition the feudal elements represented by the Raja of Ramgarh had an important role in the government. In such a coalition parties could not forget their past legacy of suspicion and antagonism and quarrels almost all minor or major issues. Almost all partners of the coalition at one time or the other threatened to walkout of the coalition in order to compel other partners to concede their demands. Thus these inherent contradictions in the nature of coalition precipitated the quick fall of the first United Front in Bihar.

In fact the non-Congress ministry in Bihar was installed under strong anti-Congress pressure. But their sharp anti-congressism could not provide much needed unity and the necessary political will to implement policies. They clearly failed in the implementation of policies which could redress peoples

38. Forms of Coalition from Iqbal Narsin, Twilight or Down — The Political Change in India (1967-71) (Agra: Shivalal Agarwal, 1972), pp.138-39.

grievances. In the fall of the UF, the Jan Sangh played a major role in widening the rift between the partners. The Jan Sangh agreed to the 32 points of the programme without hesitation, but was adamantly opposed to the policy on Urdu. This sowed the seeds of conflict inside the Front. Subsequently, the anti-Urdu demonstrations and agitations resulted in a series of communal riots, which culminated in violence and blood-shed in the city and suburbs of Ranchi.

Besides the Jan Sangh also opposed land reforms and food policy and differed sharply with the SSP and the CPI on many of these issues. The conflict stemmed from the Revenue Minister's attempt to amend the Bihar Tenancy Act to give more protection to the Bataidars (share-cropper) and from the food supply minister's proposal for a compulsory food grain levy obliging the farmers to sell a certain quota of their produce to the government at a price lower than that of the market price. On both the issues the Jan Sangh mobilised with the help of BKD and Swatantra party to rally the landlords against these proposals. Its opposition

culminated in a State-wide agitation organised by the Jan Sangh to scuttle the official food policy.

The intra-party divisions in the SSP were also responsible for precipitating the crisis in the Front government. The SSP in Bihar was essentially a conglomeration of individuals rather than a well-knit party. The land reforms question divided the SSP and in fact they did not attend a meeting convened by Jaya Prakash Narayan on land reforms.³⁹ This brought out the sharp division in the party on a major policy issue. This was because the party had many MLAs who were big landlords and therefore did not favour land reforms.

Another factor which hastened the fall of the UP Government was the inexperience of its leaders. They were not fully acquainted with the fact and skill needed to run the administration. Furthermore in the absence of a seriousness of purpose in implementing the 33 point common minimum programme, they could not decide on the priority nor did they act with objectivity and patience.

39. Girish Mishra and Braj Kumar Pandey, op.cit., p.10.

The Defectors' Government:

After the fall of the first UF Government, Satish Prasad Singh a nominee of the Shoshit Dal was sworn in as an interim Chief Minister of Bihar.⁴⁰ This arrangement was necessary because B.P. Mandal, who was instrumental in the fall of Mahamaya ministry and was the most prominent leader of the Shoshit Dal could not be appointed Chief Minister, because he was not a member of the Bihar Legislature. In view of this problem the Congress-Shoshit Dal alliance agreed that the Chief Minister Satish Prasad Singh would nominate B.P. Mandal to the Vidhan Parishad in place of Parmanand who resigned his seat. After his nomination to the Vidhan Parishad the Congress backed Shoshit Dal ministry led by B.P. Mandal was formed in February 1968.

An important aspect of Mandal's ministry was that it was composed almost entirely of defectors. Consequently everyone who defected from the Shoshit Dal was rewarded with a ministerial berth. The largest number of defection were from SSP followed by the JKD,

40. Indian Nation, 29 January 1968.

Jharkhand group and Independents.

Table- IV ⁴¹

Region/Name	Caste/ Community	Rural/ Urban	Constituency
CABINET MINISTERS:			
<u>North Plain</u>			
B.P. Mandal (SSP)	Yadav	-	Nominated
Shatrumardhan Sinha (JKD)	Rajput	Rural	Lauriya (Champeran)
Setya Narain Sharma (PSP)	Bhumihar	Rural	Dhaka (Champeran)
Ahmad Karim (Independent)	Muslim	Rural	Adapur (Champeran)
Mahantha Ram Kishore Das (JKD)	Bhumihar	Rural	Minapur (Muzaffarpur)
<u>South Plain</u>			
Jagdeo Prasad (PSP)	Koiri	Rural	Kurtha (Gaya)
Satish Prasad Singh (SSP)	Koiri	Rural	Parbatta (Monghyr)
Sandar Harihar Singh (Independent)	Rajput	Rural	Duaroon (Sahabad)
Ram Chander Yadav (SSP)	Yadav	Rural	Gaya (Muffasil)

41. "Caste & Constituency", Supra, ch.III, p.109.

Tarni Prasad (JKD)	Koiri	Urban	Barh (Patna)
Ram Nagina Singh (SSP)	Yadav	Rural	Maner (Patna)
S.M. Hashim (SSP)	Muslim	Urban	Monghyr (Monghyr)
Paul Hansda (Jharkhand)	Scheduled Tribes	Rural	Mehespur (SP)
<u>Chotanagpur</u>			
N.E. Horo (Jharkhand)	Scheduled Tribes	Rural	Kolibira (Ranchi)
P.C. Birua (Independent)	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Mojhgaon (Ranchi)
Shiburnjan Khan (Independent)	Teli	Rural	Bahragonon (Ranchi)
Brindawan Swansi (JKD)	Scheduled Caste	Rural	Silli (Ranchi)
MINISTERS OF STATE:			
<u>North Plains</u>			
Mahabir Prasad Yadav (SSP)	Yadav	Rural	Nadhepura (Sahasra)
Mahabir Prasad (SSP)	Yadav	Rural	Biraul (Dharbhanga)
Harjun Shahi (JKD)	Bhunihar	Urban	Bottiah (Champaran)
S.M. Abdulla (CPI)	Muslim	Rural	Mahraura (Saran)
Debilalji (SSP)	Yadav	Rural	Harsidh (Champaran)

South Plains

B.P. Jawhar (Congress)	Kurmi	Rural	Aethawan (Patna)
Ram Chander Prasad (Jan Sangh)	Scheduled Caste	Rural	Fatwa (Patna)
Ramashish Singh (SSP)	Koiri	Rural	Dinara (Sahabad)
Nathmal Dokania (Swatantra)	Marwari	Rural	Rajmahal (SP)
Musthaq Ali Khan (JKD)	Muslim	Rural	Sherghatti (Gaya)

Chotanagour

Simon Tigga (Congress)	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Chainpur (Ranchi)
Balwant Nath Singh (JKD)	Rajput	Rural	Mundu (Hazaribagh)
Majhia Majhi (Jan Sangh)	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Chekradharpur (Singhbhum)

DEPUTY MINISTERS:

Sohanlal Jain (Swatantra)	Marwari	Rural	Barsoi (Pusha)
Swami Vivekanand (SSP)	Scheduled Caste	Rural	Sikandam (Monghyr)
Bhagat Murmu (Jharkhand)	Scheduled	Rural	Litipara (SP)

From the table it emerges that in contrast to the first UP Government the Mandal ministry was dominated by backward castes. There were twelve backward caste ministers as against nine in the Mahamaya ministry. Among them (backward castes) Yadava secured six berths including the Chief Minister, followed by Koiris, Kurmis, Tellis. The scheduled castes/scheduled tribes got also more seats than the earlier government. Muslims also got one more berth than first UP Government.

The Mandal ministry however remained in power for 47 days. The defection engineered by the Congress had inducted B.P. Mandal into the chief ministers office and defection from the Congress led him out of power after a few days. Defying the party whip 16 Congress MLAs supported the no confidence motion, which was carried out by 165 to 148 votes.⁴²

The Sheshit Dal ministry failed to fulfil the promises it made. For example they were committed to the abolition of land tax, but they reimposed the land

42. The Indian Nation, 19 March 1968.

tax. The Shoshit Dal ministry withdrew the right of teachers to participate in politics which was granted them by UF ministry. The dissatisfaction with the alliance in the Congress also weakened the government. An influential group in the CLP, led by B.N. Jha was not reconciled to the Congress extending support to the Mandal government. Harinath Mishra, a former co-operative minister and an influential leader of the group strongly opposed the "unprincipled and opportunistic alliance" with the Shoshit Dal just for the purpose of toppling the ministry. He threatened to revolt if the strategy was not changed.⁴³ Not surprisingly this group supported the no confidence motion against the Mandal ministry.

In fact on its part, the Shoshit Dal had no programme or organization. It was an amorphous group of a self-seeking individuals. It was a minority ministry which had no worthwhile programme of action and did not possess the necessary experience to run the administration. The Dal was interested only in keeping itself in power and the Congress supported it because it wanted to keep the UF out.

43. Link, 24 September 1967, p.24.

The Second UF Ministry:

After the fall of the Shoshit Dal ministry, Bhola Paswan Shastri was elected as the leader of the United Front which staked its claim to form the government. Bhola Paswan Shastri was sworn as the fourth chief minister of Bihar,⁴⁴ since the 1967 elections and the first eveh Harijan Chief Minister of the State.

The Table- V will give a caste/composition and rural/urban picture of Bhola Paswan's second UF ministry.

Table- V⁴⁵

Region/Name	Caste/ Community	Rural/ Urban	Constituency
CABINET MINISTERS:			
<u>North Plains</u>			
Bhola Paswan Shastri (Loktatrik Dal)	Dusadh	Rural	Korha (Purnea)
Krishna Kant Singh (LGD)	Bhumihar	Rural	Goreakothi (Saran)
Rameshwar Prasad Sinha (LCD)	Kurmi	Urban	Darbhanga

44. The Indian Nation, 23 March 1968.

45. "Caste & Constituency", Supra, ch.III, p.109.

Chandra Sekhar Singh (CPI)	Bhumihar	Urban	Barauni
Hasibur Rahman (PSP)	Muslim	Rural	Amour (Purnea)
Kamakhya Narain Singh (Janata)	Rajput	Rural	Jalapur (Saran)
Rampati Singh (PSP)	Rajput	Rural	Patahi (Ghamparan)
Deep Nareyan Singh (LCD)	Rajput	Rural	Lalganj (Muzaffarpur)
<u>South Plains</u>			
Vijoy Kumar Mitra (Jan Sangh)	Bengali	Urban	Bhagalpur
Ramdeo Mahto (Jan Sangh)	Koiri	Urban	Patna (East)
<u>Chotanagpur</u>			
Mashi Rasraj Tuddu (LCD)	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Jugsalai (Singhbhum)
Basant Narain Singh (Janata)	Rajput	Rural	Bagodar (Hazaribagh)
Indradeep Singh (CPI)	-	-	-

From the table it emerges, although the chief minister^{was} from the scheduled caste, his ministry was dominated by the forward castes. There were seven

forward caste ministers and three from the backward castes in his ministry. Yadavas the dominant caste among the backwards found no representation in the second UP ministry. Women were also not represented in his ministry.

However the Paswan ministry had with its very claim to form the government submitted to the Governor a 17 point common programme of the Front. Some of them were: (i) Rehabilitation of the financial position of the State; (ii) expansion of irrigation facilities; (iii) improvement in the administrative set up as a whole; (iv) devising ways and means of reducing unemployment; (v) taking necessary steps to complete the process of land reforms; (vi) redistribution of the available cultivable fallow land among the landless; (vii) making proper arrangement for successful completion of the Aiyar Commission.⁴⁶

But the fate of the second UP ministry was no different from the first. In fact the 95 day old ministry went out of office without even passing the

46. The Times of India, 23 April 1968.

State budget. In his resignation letter Bhole Paswan stated that: "in the present situation when none of the political parties is in an absolute majority in the Vidhan Sabha and Kamkhya Narain Singh, PWD Minister is placing before me directly or indirectly such demands as could not be accepted in the interests of the people of the State, it will not be possible for me to run a democratic government."⁴⁷ The chief minister blamed the Congress for conspiring to topple his government with a view to scuttling the judicial probe ordered by the first UF government into the charges of corruption against the former chief minister.

The leadership of the Congress Party was also not reconciled to the Paswan ministry and was in a hurry to return to power by continuing the toppling game. M.P. Sinha admitted that Congress would continue its efforts to explore the possibility of making common cause with like minded democratic parties so that the State did not suffer political instability.⁴⁸ The

47. The Indian Nation, 22 June 1968.

48. Subhash G. Kashyap, opcit., p.334.

resignation of the Raja of Ramgarh provided an opportunity to the Congress to organize the fall of the UF.

The SSP and BKD exacerbated the crisis of the ministry by making demands which were impossible to fulfill. For example the SSP demanded representation for Harijans, Adivasi, women and backward castes in the government although the SSP itself did not follow this while finalising its own list of nominees in the first UP ministry. They could raised the tempo of pressure from outside since it had not joined the government.

The BKD also had not joined the ministry and gave only qualified support to the government. But after sometime the party withdrew even its qualified support from the ministry. The CPI(M), smaller partner of the Front, also did not join the ministry and withdrew its support from the government alongwith BKD.

So the fall of the second SVD government and the dissolution of the State assembly marked the end of the first phase of non-congressism in Bihar. It was

a phase characterised by desire of the masses to somehow get rid of the Congress and replace it with any other government. Consequently a series of amorphous non-Congress governments consisting of political parties ranging from the Jan Sangh to Socialist and Communist with disparate ideologies and strategies came together to form coalition governments which could not last for a variety of reasons mentioned earlier. The three ministerial collapses were brought about by large scale defections. The way, in which the successive governments fall suggests that three important factors which affected the stability of the ministries, were "the personal ambitions of the frustrated ministers, internal party divisions and cross party or single party legislative interests, such as those of the middle castes or those of a great landlords, industrialist and his personal dependents."⁴⁹ It is also important to note that none of the three ministerial crisis could be attributed to the withdrawal of the support by a party on a question of principles. Such is the fate of all disparate coalitions.

49. Paul R. Brass, "Coalition Politics in North India", op.cit., p.1184.

Chapter- IV

**THE MIXED COALITION GOVERNMENT -- THE
CONGRESS LED COALITION GOVERNMENT**

THE MIXED COALITION GOVERNMENT
THE CONGRESS LED COALITION GOVERNMENT

Bihar was placed under President's Rule for eight months from June 1968 to February 1969, after the resignation of the Paswan government. Throughout this interregnum negotiations and search for political coalition partners went on among the various parties.

A significant new development which occurred during this period was the split in the Indian National Congress in 1969. The split in the Party created confusion in the Bihar Congress and it took some time for the Bihar leaders and the rank and file to decide their allegiance. By and large the big three in the Bihar Congress - K.B. Sahay, M.P. Sinha and S.N. Sinha minus most of their lower caste followers joined with the old Congress. The young turks and the majority of the Brahmins and lower castes joined the new Congress.

The mid-term elections in February 1969 failed to provide a stable majority government because no party received a majority. Despite the multiplicity

of parties and a refurbished image gained from the exclusion of the controversial leaders¹, Congress suffered further losses.

Table- I shows the electoral performance of the political parties in the 1969 mid-term poll compared to the 1967 general election.

Table- I

Political Parties	Years	
	1967	1969
Congress	128	118
Jan Sangh	26	34
SSP	68	52
CPI	24	25
CPI(M)	4	3
PSP	18	17
Swatantra	3	3
Other Parties	14	39
Independent	33	19

Sources: National Herald, 18 February 1969.

1. Five controversial leaders namely, K.B. Sahay, M.P. Sinha, R.L.S. Yadav and Ambika Saran Singh were not given Congress ticket to contest in the mid term poll.

While the Congress share was reduced from 128 in 1967 to 118 in 1969, its loss of seats did not result in gains for any other party. The Congress lost 81 seats to different parties, it gained 71 seats from them. The Congress was able to retain a little over 30 per cent of the seats, that is 47 out of 128, won in 1967, a performance matched only by the SSP and surpassed only by CPI (which retained 40 % of the seats won in 1967). The Jan Sangh and the PSP on the otherhand, could retain only about one-third (33%) of the seats won in 1967. It is also to be noted that only the Jan Sangh gave a better performance in 1969 than in 1967.

A notable feature of the mid term election was that while the two parties of defectors — Shoshit Dal and Loktantric Congress suffered heavy losses, the third one Janata Party of Raja Ramgarh retained its hold over the electorate in the Chotanagpur region of the State. However most of the LCD leader including B.P. Shastri, K.K. Sinha, Deep Narayan Singh and Liliteswar Prasad Sahi (L.P. Sahi) returned victorious.²

2. Link, 23 February 1969, p.19.

From Shoshit Dal out of over two dozen former Shoshit Dal ministers, who had contested the polls, only three to four had won. The Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) Chairman, Mehamaya Prasad Sinha, was returned from Maharajganj constituency in Saran district.

An analyses of the mid-term election shows that by and large all the main parties retained their position. Marginal losses or gains were recorded by one party or the other, but the total picture was one of no change. Thus the pattern of party strength emerging out of mid term election was more or less similar to that after 1967. The only difference was that the non-Congress parties after the general elections were in a move to coalesce to keep the Congress out but this time at least some of them were more choosy about their coalition partners.

As far the formation of ministry is concerned, attempts were made to form another SVD (Samyukta Vidhayak Dal) but the mutual antipathy of the Jan Sangh and CPI stood in the way. Immediately after the announcement of

the poll result the SSP started intense activity for the establishment of a non-Congress coalition.³ The triple alliance (SSP, FSP and LCD), which had fought election unitedly, elected B.P. Shastri as its leader. But the CPI declared that it would support from outside any non-Congress government which did not include the Jan Sangh and the Janata Party of the Raja of Ramgarh. The Jan Sangh also declared its decision not to sit in coalition with the CPI. Thus these two parties foiled the move of a non-Congress coalition government because without their support such a government could not be established. Thus mere non-congressism did not succeed this time, and so despite continuing efforts of triple alliance, the prospect of a non-Congress coalition receded.

In contrast to 1967 the initiative now lay with the Congress, which was able to forge an alliance and form a ministry. But the election of Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader involved hard bargaining. There were three or four serious contenders for the

3. Link, 2 March 1969, p.14.

post. The BPC President A.P. Sharma, despite his desire could not muster enough support and quietly withdrew from the field. The dissidents and younger party elements set up Daroga Prasad Rai, a former minister of State. These five State Congress bosses, who were kept out of the poll, raised their heads again and tried to play the role of king-makers and sponsored the names of Sardar Harihar Singh.⁴ On 19 February 1969 Sardar Harihar Singh was elected the leader of the Bihar Legislature Party by defeating D.P. Rai by 140 votes to 33 votes.⁵ He was invited by the Governor to form a government, but Harihar Singh sought five days time to fulfill certain formalities.⁶ He sought this time only to forge an alliance with the smaller and splinter groups to muster the majority necessary to form a government. He succeeded in securing the support of the Janata Party, the BKD, the Jharkhand Party, the Shoshit Dal, the Swatantra Party and six independents after a

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4. Subhash C. Kashyap, The Politics of Power (New Delhi: National Publishing, 1974), p.346.
 5. The Indian Nation, 20 January 1969.
 6. The Times of India, 22 February 1969.

very prolonged bargaining, claiming absolute majority in the 318 member assembly, he submitted to the Governor a list of 162 supporters.

Sardar Harihar Singh was sworn in as Chief Minister of the first ever Congress led coalition government in Bihar. With the installation of the Harihar Singh government, the 242 day old President's rule in Bihar came to an end. However a sizeable section of the dissident Congressmen led by D.P. Rai were critical of the hurry with which the Congress bosses had gone ahead with the formation of the Congress coalition.⁷ It was perhaps, because of this controversy that no other ministers could be sworn-in alongwith the Chief Minister. The swearing-in of the first batch of ministers scheduled for 5 March 1969 had to be put off following a controversy over the inclusion of the Raja of Ramgarh, against whom the Calcutta High Court had passed some strictures. However, the first batch of twelve ministers, including the Raja and his younger

7. The Times of India, 27 February 1963.

brother (both Janata) one nominee each of the Jharkhand, Shoshit Dal and eight congressmen was sworn-in on 7 March 1969.

But there were hurdles in the expansion of the Sardar Harihar Singh ministry and in the distribution of portfolios. Because each of the five group leaders in the State Congress wanted a bigger quota for themselves in the ministry. Among the ministers appointed so far, there was not a single Bhumihar, this has naturally irritated Mr. M.P. Sinha, leader of the Bhumihar caste faction in the State Congress. He was also unhappy because the reins of the coalition ministry seems to be in the hand of S.N. Sinha, leader of the Rajput caste faction and R.L.S. Yadav, leader of the Yadav caste faction in the State Congress. Once the expansion of the ministry and the distribution of portfolio were taken up, there were bound to be clamour for longer share and differences among the five group leaders.⁸

Besides this the Congress dissidents, who were not reconciled to Harihar Singh's Chief ministership,

8. The Hindu, 23 March 1969.

found in the inclusion ^{of} ~~in~~ the Raja of Ramgarh in the cabinet a handy issue to embarrass Harihar Singh. The inclusion of the Raja and the refusal of D.P. Rai to join the ministry roused strong feelings and differences in the Congress Working Committee. C. Subramaniam supported by Kamraj and Jagjivan Ram attacked, while Mr. S.K. Patil and Y.B. Chavan defended the Parliamentary Board's decision to permit the party to enter into a coalition without prior agreement on principles and programmes. S. Nijalingappa, the then Congress President took full responsibility for permitting Harihar Singh to include the controversial Raja in the Cabinet and offered to resign from the presidentship on this issue.⁹ But on 8 March 1969, C. Subramaniam resigned from the CWC and did not agree to withdraw his resignation despite the unanimous request of CWC to this effect. On the contrary, he insisted that, Harihar Singh should be asked to resign and reconstitute his government after excluding the Raja. He was strongly opposed to unprincipled coalition solely for the purpose of getting into power

9. Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit., p.349.

as these led to 'unprincipled defections'.¹⁰ Seeing the controversy getting out of control an emergency meeting of the CWC on 12 March was reported to have asked the Chief Minister of Bihar to persuade the Raja of Ramgarh to resign in favour of his son and any other nominee from his Janata Party. If the Raja refused to agree, the Chief Minister was to submit ~~his~~^{the} resignation of his ministry and reconstitute it without the Raja. After a great deal of bargaining and behind the scene drama, the Raja resigned from the Cabinet on 28 March 1969 on grounds of the 'unbecoming controversy' that had been unleashed against him by "certain responsible persons of the high command".¹¹ His resignation was accepted by the Governor on 2 April 1969.

The Harihar Singh ministry was expanded on 17 April 1969, when Srimati Manjari Devi, mother of the Raja of Ramgarh and P.C. Birua of the Jharkhand Party were sworn in as Cabinet ministers and Mahabir Prasad of the Shoshit Dal as minister of State. Again the

10. Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit., p.349.

11. The Indian Express, 29 March 1969.

ministry was expanded with the addition of 11 Cabinet Ministers and 7 Minister of State, raising the strength of the Ministry to 33. Out of thirtythree ministers in the Congress led coalition ministry the Congress had 19 members in Council of Ministers, including the Chief Minister. It was followed by the Janata Party which had six members in the ministry. The Hul Jharkhand had only one member in the ministry. The Shoshit Dal was given two berths in the ministry.

Table- II

Showing Caste/Community, Constituency, region and Rural/Urban bases of the Members of the Harihar Singh Ministry, 1969.

Name/Region	Caste/ Community	Rural/ Urban	Constituency
CABINET MINISTERS:			
<u>North Plains</u>			
Kamaldev Narain Sinha (Congress)	Kayastha	Urban	Purnea
Kedar Pandey (Congress)	Brahmin	Rural	Nautar (Champaran)
Zewar Hussain (Congress)	Muslim	Rural	Ziradei (Saran)

Dunar Lal Baitha (Congress)	Dhobi (SC)	Rural	Raniganj (Purnea)
Mohammad Hussain Asad (Congress)	Muslim	Rural	Thakurganj (Purnea)
Sahdeo Mohito (Congress)	Koiri	Urban	Rosera (Darbhanga)
Ram Jaipal Singh Yadav (Congress)	Yadav	Rural	Sonepur (Purnea)
Daroga Prasad Rai (Congress)	Yadav	Rural	Parasa (Saran)
Lalhan Choudhry (Congress)	Bania	Rural	Mohishi (Saharsa)
Rajendra Pratap Singh (Congress)	Rajput	Rural	Ghorasahan (Champeran)
Baleswar Ram (Congress)	Lusahn (SC)	Rural	Hayaghat (Darbhanga)
Sarju Prasad Singh (Congress)	Bhumihar	Urban	Begusari (Monghyr)
<u>South Plain</u>			
Sardar Harihar Singh (Congress)	Rajput	Rural	Dumraon (Sahabad)
Jagdeo Prasad (Shoshit Dal)	Koiri	Rural	Kurtha (Gaya)
Shatrughan Sharan Singh (Congress)	Bhumihar	Rural	Hisua (Gaya)
Seth Namberun (Mul Jharkhand)	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Borie (SP)
<u>Chotanagpur:</u>			
Basant Narain Singh (Janata)	Rajput	Rural	Bagodar (Hazaribagh)
Neelan E. Horo (Jharkhand)	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Torpo (Ranchi)

Smt Shashank Manjari (Janata)	Rajput	Rural	Jaisidih (Hazaribagh)
T. Mochirai Munda (Congress)	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Khunti (Ranchi)
Puran Chand Birua	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Maghgaon (Singhbhum)

MINISTER OF STATE:

North Plains

Mahabir Prasad (Shoshit Dal)	Yadav	Rural	Birauli (Darbanga)
Nagina Rai (Janata)	Bhumihar	Rural	Kuchoikot (Saran)
Azimu'ddin (Independent)	Muslim	Rural	Palasi (Purnea)
Kailashpeti Singh (Janata)	Rajput	Rural	Dumri (Hazaribagh)
Purnendu N Singh (Janata)	Rajput	Rural	Topchandi (Dhenbad)
Reghunandan Prasad (Janata)	Koiri	Urban	Hazaribagh
Retnaker Naik (Jharkhand)	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Manoharpur (Singhbhum)
Mungeri Lal (Congress)	Dusadh	-	-
Jagannath Prasad Singh (Congress)	Rajput	-	-
Ram Bilas Singh (Congress)	Bhumihar	-	-

Source: "Names and Party of the Ministers",
Indian Matter, 18 April 1969;
Searchlight, 19 May 1969;
Supra, Ch.III, p.109
 Constituency : India, Election Commission
 Report on the Mid-Term General Elections in
 India 1968-69, vol.II (Statistical) 1970.

From the point of view of caste composition, the Harihar Singh ministry was dominated by the upper caste. Out of 33 ministers, fourteen came from these castes. Of these seven including the Chief Minister were Rajputs, four Bhumihars, two Brahmins and one Kayastha. The Rajputs bagged half of the total share of the upper castes. The backward castes had eight berths in the Congress-led coalition. Of these four were Koiris, three Yadavs and one was a Bania. There were five scheduled tribes minister. Three members of the Harihar ministry were scheduled castes. The Muslims had three berths in the government.

However the Harihar Singh ministry was shaky since the day of its formation. On the question of portfolios the six-member Shoshit Dal and the three member Swatantra Party in the Bihar assembly, both constituent of the Congress-led coalition ministry threatened to withdraw their support to the government. Shoshit Dal felt that the Chief Minister was not been fair to its nominee in the Cabinet, Jagdeo Prasad, who has been given the portfolio of river valley project and planning. Jagdeo Prasad wanted two more portfolios irrigation and power which he held previously. The Swatantra group was threatened to part company with the coalition on two

issues. First, if the government did not scrap the appointment of a five men briefing committee to assist Aiyar and Mudholkar Commission of Enquiry which in the Shoshit Dal opinion was meant to protect former Congress ministers facing an enquiry by the Aiyar Commission. On the second point it wanted to draw the chief minister's attention to a report of increased Naxalite activities involving looting the Rabi crops at the point of guns, bombs and other weapons in area bordering Nepal and said, if the government could not contain this menace his party would withdraw its support to the ministry.¹²

The Congress-led coalition ministry headed by Harihar Singh drafted a 21 point common minimum programme. The draft programme stressed that law and order and stability of administration were the first charges of the government. As regards economic development, it stated that the priority be given to irrigation to help the State to achieve self-sufficiency in the shortest possible time. It also emphasised the need for industrial development of backward areas to avoid regional imbalances in economic growth. It also announced that though Hindi

12. The Hindustan Times, 7 April 1969.

would be the State language, full opportunities would be provided for the development of Urdu and other languages.¹³

But Harihar Singh ministry could not continue for long. It suffered a defeat in the Assembly on the budget demands of the animal husbandry department after remaining in power for 115 days.¹⁴ While the assembly was debating the demand, Jagdeo Prasad and Mahabir Prasad, ministers in coalition government of Shoshit Dal, alongwith other four members crossed the floor and voted against the government. Similarly Seth Hambrum of the Hul Jharkhand led his group from the Treasury benches to the opposition benches.¹⁵ This compelled the resignation of the government.

The main reason behind the collapse of the first Congress led coalition government was Harihar Singh's indecisiveness and inability to finalise the distribution of portfolios. This was an important source of discontent which led to considerable administrative

13. The Searchlight, 4 June 1969.

14. The Times of India, 21 June 1969.

15. The Searchlight, 21 June 1969.

dislocation. But the Chief Minister was postponing the evil because he was unable to reconcile the conflicting claims of his angry and ambitious colleagues.¹⁶

Besides Harihar Singh was not the best choice for the chief ministership.¹⁷ The congressmen were not united and dissidents seemed to be as eager as the opposition parties to bring about the fall of the Harihar Singh government. Initially, Harihar Singh was elected leader of the CLP with the support of the leaders of the five groups in the State Congress. The Chief Minister openly and repeatedly declared his subservience to K.E. Sahay, M.P. Sinha and S.N. Sinha. But they fell apart over the distribution of ministerial seats and portfolios and they started wooing dissidents to oust the ministry.¹⁸ Harihar Singh himself depended too much on the big bosses of the Congress and the Janata Party, particularly the Raja of Ramgarh. This lowered his government's image in public because he could not even complete his team of ministers. All the time Harihar

16. Anrit Bazar Patrika, 27 June 1969.

17. The Searchlight, 22 June 1969.

18. Anrit Bazar Patrika, 23 June 1969.

Singh was busy shifting the claims and counter claims of Congress legislators for being included in the cabinet. The expansion in instalments reflects the difficulties Harihar Singh was facing in selecting his colleagues. He had not only to satisfy the rival claims of the various constituents of the ill assorted coalitions, but to contend against the conflicting pulls within his own party. Harihar Singh created history by not allotting portfolios to 21 out of 33 ministers.

The Chief Minister's style of functioning also annoyed some of the partners of the coalition. His action in withdrawing an appeal pending in the Supreme Court for managing all properties involved in the long drawn litigations between the Raja of Ramgarh and the State government, without taking cabinet into confidence or consulting the department concerned, made the Jharkhand Party and the Shoshit Dal extremely unhappy. In the Cabinet meeting several ministers expressed resentment on the issue.¹⁹

However the greatest difficulty that the coalition faced was from the wrangling within the Congress Party.

19. Link, 25 May 1969, p.14.

The Congress Party was as divided as it was before the mid-term poll. The big bosses who installed Harihar Singh as Chief Minister, were responsible for digging his grave. They never allowed Harihar Singh to work independently. The dissidents also had their share in bringing down their 'own government'. Once defeated in the leadership contest, they started pressing their claims over ministerial seats and portfolios. All this brought about the downfall of the Harihar Singh ministry.

The Third United Front Government:

The fall of the Harihar Singh ministry brought the United Front to power for the third time. Bholu Paswan Shastri, the leader of the opposition in the Assembly, was again invited by the Governor to form a new government.²⁰ Earlier the PSP, SSP, CPI, Jan Sangh, LCD (Loktantric Congress Dal), Shoshit Dal and some other smaller and splinters groups within the Assembly accepted Paswan as their leader in the Legislature.²¹

20. Asian Recorder (New Delhi),
6-12 August 1969, p.9054.

21. Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit., p.354.

Table- III will show caste/community, constituency and rural/urban bases of the member of B.P. Shastri government.

Table- III

Name/Region	Caste/ Community	Rural/ Urban	Constituency
CABINET MINISTERS:			
<u>North Plains</u>			
Bhola Paswan Shastri (LCD)	Dusadh (SC)	Rural	Korha (Purnea)
Deep Narain Singh (LCD)	Rajput	Rural	Lalgaonj (Muzaffarpur)
Krishan Kant Singh (LCD)	Bhumihar	Rural	Goreskothi (Saran)
Laliteswar Prasad Sahi (LCD)	Bhumihar	Rural	Vaishali (Muzaffarpur)
Mahabir Prasad (Shoshit Dal)	Yadav	Rural	Biraut (Darbanga)
Notilal Singh Kanan (Shoshit Dal)	Yadav	Urban	Hazipur (Muzaffarpur)
Jamaluddin Ahmad (Congress defector)	Muslim	Urban	Balia (Monghyr)
<u>South Plains</u>			
Sheo Shankar Singh (Independent)	Bhumihar	Rural	Barbigha (Monghyr)
Khaderan Singh (BKD)	Bhumihar	Rural	Bikram (Patna)
Syed Mohammad Zafar Ali (Congress defector)	Muslim	Rural	Pakpura (SP)

Chotanagpur

Sushil Kumar Bage (Jharkhand)	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Kolibera (Ranchi)
Shankar Dayal Singh (BKD)	Rajput	-	-
Abdul Ghafoor (LCD)	Muslim	-	-

MINISTER OF STATE:

South Plain

Ram Ballabh Singh (Independent)	Kurmi	Rural	Konch (Gaya)
Harilal Prasad Singh (Shoshit Dal)	Yadav	Urban	Jhanebad (Gaya)
Satya Narain Singh (Independent)	Yadav	Rural	Jagdishpur (Shebad)

Chotanagpur

Haricharan Roy (Jharkhand)	Scheduled Tribe	Urban	Chaikradharpur (Singhbhum)
Birndawan Swaini (Shos hit Dal)	Scheduled Caste	Rural	Silli (Ranchi)
Ghan Shyam Mahto (Forward bloc)	Koiri	Rural	Ichanagar (Singhbhum)

- Sources: (a) The names and Party of the Ministers, Times of India, 23 June & 25 June 1969; Hindustan Times, 1 July 1969.
- (b) Caste, Supra, ch.III, p.109.
- (c) Constituency vide, Supra, ch.IV, p.186.

From the caste point of view, out of the 19 ministers of the Paswan ministry, six ministers belonged each to the forward castes and the backward castes. There were three Muslims in the United Front ministry. Two were scheduled caste ministers; one was Paswan himself and the other was a minister of State. The remaining two ministers came from the scheduled tribes.

However, the Paswan ministry proved to be the shortest ever government in Bihar. Nine days after its installation the third SVD ministry resigned on 1 July 1969 following the withdrawal of support by the 34 member Jan Sangh group in the Vidhan Sabha.²²

The immediate provocation for the Jan Sangh's action was the inclusion in the cabinet of two defectors from the Congress and the Front strategy for redressing the grievances of the tribal people to get the support of the Hul Jharkhand Party. The Jan Sangh put forward the view that no defector should as a matter of principle be appointed minister.²³

22. The Times of India, 2 July 1969.

23. Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit., p.355.

Although the immediate reason for Paswan's resignation was the withdrawal of support by the Jan Sangh, the ministry immediately after sworn began its term with frantic efforts for survival in the face of a threat by the ousted Congress to topple it. The threat came within an hour of the installation of the new ministry.²⁴ In fact the Paswan ministry had never been in a comfortable position necessary to provide a stable government. Its stability was questionable from the day the four major partners of the SVD viz., the SSP, the CPI, the PSP and Jan Sangh had refused to join the ministry. Moreover, there were differences of opinion, from the very beginning between the Jan Sangh on the one hand, and the SSP, CPI, PSP and LCD on the other on the ministry making. Thus the greater share of responsibility for the fall of the Paswan ministry falls on these major constituents of the SVD government, had they actively participated in the ministry, the latter might have survived, at least for some time. But they did not join it on the plea that they would

24. The Times of India, 22 June 1969.

function as a watch dog to ensure the implementation of a time bound programme in the interest of the people.²⁵ This explanation seemed to be unteakable because government comprising of Shoshit Dal, Hul Jharkhand and Jharkhand Party could not provide even a superficial stability to the government.

Moreover, the lapses in the conduct of the Jan Sangh did not absolve B.P. Shastri of his own unprincipled conduct. In fact his ministry was sustained by the defectors from other parties. All the four defectors were appointed ministers.

In fact, Paswan was in search of more and more defectors from the Jharkhand, the Congress and the Janata Party. Even the arrangement among the constituents of the UP that 50 per cent of the defectors should be made ministers was unscrupulous. But Paswan went a step further and increased the percentage on his own. He argued that those legislators who had voluntarily decided to support the SVD government to make it more stable

25. The Indian Nation, 2 July 1969.

"did deserve adequate representation in the ministry".²⁶
It was a confession of political expediency which dictated his decision.

Reacting to the fall of the Shastri government leaders of many political parties like Mr. Satyendra Narain Sinha of the Congress said: I have no hesitation in admitting that we had committed a wrong in bringing in the Shastri-Dal government. But Mr. Shastri's conduct was worse. It was great threat to healthy parliamentary democracy. Mr. Karpoori Thakur, commending on the fall of the 10 day old non-Congress United Front ministry headed by Mr. Shastri, told that the crisis was precipitated by the Jan Sangh, one of the constituents of the UP, because it used to oppose the inclusion of Muslims and the Christians in the Shastri cabinet.

The Secretariat of the Bihar State Council of the CPI explained the failure of the government in a statement to the press: The first Shastri government had

26. Asian Recorder, 6-12 August 1969, p.9069.

to resign, because it refused to submit to the black mail of the Raja of Ramgarh and now the second Shastri government had resigned because it refused to succumb to the communal reactionary dictates of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, which opposed not only the vital demands of the tribal people but even the inclusion of the tribal Christians and Muslims in the government.²⁷ So in these circumstances the Paswan ministry was bound to collapse.

The Congress-(R) Led Coalition Government:

After the fall of the B.P. Shastri ministry President rule was imposed in Bihar. The State Legislature instead of being dissolved was suspended, with view of reactivating it when the chances for formation of new ministry emerged. But this second spell of President rule came to an end on 16 February, when a six party Congress-(R) led coalition headed by Daroga Prasad Rai, was installed in the State.²⁸ The Congress-(R), the PSP, the BKD, the Shoshit Dal and the Jharkhand Party were the partners of the six party coalition.

27. The Searchlight, 3 July 1969.

28. Ibid., 17 February 1970.

The period between 4 July 1969 and 16 February 1970 saw some important events taking place in Bihar politics. The findings of the two commission of enquiry that enquired into the charges of corruption against the former Bihar ministers came to light. The Madholkar Commission of Enquiry, appointed by the Shoshit Dal ministry, submitted its report to the Governor, and held thirteen out of fourteen ministers, against whom investigation were made, guilty of abusing their official position.²⁹ The Aiyar Commission, set up by the first UP government to probe into the charges of corruption against the former Chief Minister K.B. Sahay and five of his cabinet colleagues, also submitted its report to the Governor.³⁰ The Commission indicted all the six ministers and found them guilty of favouritism and abuse of power.

The 1969 split in the Congress seriously affected the Bihar Congress. With the exception of Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav, the other five Congress leaders

29. Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit., p.358.

30. Asian Recorder, 26 March—12 April 1970, p.9463.

stayed with the Congress-(O), while the new dissidents in the Bihar Congress aligned themselves with the Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi's Congress-(R). The third event of far reaching political importance was that following the Congress split and the report of the Aiyar Commission, a new alignment did take place among the erstwhile partners of the SVD. The CPI and the PSP left their old partners and formed an alliance with the Congress-(R) in accordance with their national policy.

The three member coalition ministry, backed by the six party alliance was sworn-in with 11 cabinet ministers and 6 minister of state and one parliament secretary. Of the six party ruling alliance, PSP, CPI and Shoshit Dal decided not to join the government for the time being. Besides the Congress-(R), the other two parties that joined the government were the Jharkhand Party and the BKD each having one cabinet post. With the six round of expansion the D.P. Rai's ministry gone from three men ministry to 31 member ministry.³¹

31. Searchlight, 8 September 1970.

Table- IV

Showing caste/community, constituency, region, rural/urban bases of the members of the Congress-(R) led coalition ministry, 1970.

<u>Name/Region</u>	<u>Caste/ Community</u>	<u>Rural/ Urban</u>	<u>Constituency</u>
CABINET MINISTERS:			
<u>North Plains</u>			
Daroga Prasad Rai (Cong-R)	Yadav	Rural	Parasa (Saran)
Kedar Pande (Cong-R)	Brahmin	Rural	Nautan (Champanan)
Ram Jaipal Singh Yadav (Cong-R)	Yadav	Rural	Soneput (Saran)
Zawar Hussain (Cong-R)	Muslim	Rural	Ziradei (Saran)
Baleswar Ram (Cong-R)	Dusadh (SC)	Rural	Hayacht (Dharbhanga)
Lahtan Choudhry (Cong-R)	Bania	Rural	Mahishi (Sahassa)
Nagendra Jha (Cong-R)	Brahmin	Rural	Manigachhi (Darbhanga)
Mohammed Hussain Azad (Cong-R)	Muslim	Rural	Thakurgunj (Purnea)
Laliteswar Prasad Shahi (LCD)	Bhumihar	Rural	Vaishali (Muzaffarpur)

South Plains

Shastrughan Sharan Singh (Cong-R)	Bhumihar	Rural	Hisua (Gaya)
Chandra Sekhar Singh (Cong-R)	Rajput	Rural	Jhajhe (Monghyr)
Seth Hembrun (Hul Jharkhand)	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Bania (SP)
Jagdeo Prasad (Shoshit Dal)	Koiri	Rural	Kurthe (Gaya)
Rameswar Paswan (Cong-R)	Dusodh (SC)	Rural	Sikandra (Monghyr)

Chotanagpur

Bagun Sunbrui (Jharkhand)	Scheduled Tribe	Urban	Chaibasa (Singhbhum)
T. Mochi Rai Munda (Cong-R)	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Khurti (Ranchi)
Kathakar Neyak (Jharkhand)	Scheduled Tribe	Rural	Manoharpur (Singhbhum)
Shankar Dayal Sharma (BKD)	Rajput	-	-

MINISTER OF STATE

North Plains

Harisingh Baitha (Cong-R)	Dhobi (SC)	Rural	Baghr (Champaran)
Nathuni Ram Chamer (Cong-R)	Chamer	Rural	Koten (Saran)
Premchand (Cong-R)	Bania	Rural	Adepur (Champaran)
Nitiswar Prasad Singh (Cong-R)	Rajput	Rural	Gaighatti (Muzaffarpur)
Bhim Prasad Yadav (Cong-R)	Yadav	Rural	Araria (Purnea)

South Plains

Paika Murru (Cong-R)	Scheduled Tribe	Urban	Dumka (SP)
Dharmvir Singh (Cong-R)	Kurmi	Rural	Bakhtiarpur (Patna)
Yugal Kishore Singh Yadav (LCD)	Yadav	Rural	Gobindpur (Gaya)

Chotanagpur

Sadanand Prasad (Cong-R)	Kurmi	Rural	Jamua (Hazaribagh)
Ghanshyam Mahto (Cong-R)	Koiri	Rural	Potanda (Singbhum)

PARLIAMENTARY
SECRETARIES:

Madan Prasad Singh (Cong-R)		Rural	Gopalpur (Bhagalpur)
Mahant Vivekanand Giri Rajput (Independent)		Rural	Barahara (Shahabad)

Sources: (a) Ministers' name and their Party,
Searchlight, 17 February;
Indian Express, 28 February 1970.

(b) Caste of Ministers - vide
Supra, chp. III, p.109.

(c) Constituency of the Minister - vide
Supra, chp. IV, p.186.

The new ministry was dominated by the backward castes. There were twelve ministers belonging to the backward castes, whereas there were only seven from upper castes. There were four scheduled caste ministers in the Rai ministry, the scheduled tribes had five ministers. There were two Muslims in the ministry. Out of 23 Congress-(R) ministers, five belonged to the upper castes, ten backward castes. All the four scheduled caste ministers belonged to the Congress-(R). Two ministers from the scheduled tribes also represented the Congress-(R). Both Muslim ministers in the Rai ministry came from the Congress-(R). Thus the Congress-(R) had included in the ministry members of almost all important castes.

But the problems started with this ministry a little later when the leader of the PSP, S.N. Dwivedy met Jagjivan Ram, President of the ruling Congress and told that if the Congress Party did not honour its earlier commitment to support Mr. N.G. Goray's candidate for the Rajya Sabha seat from Maharashtra, his party would be compelled to withdraw its support to the Congress led

coalition ministry in Bihar.³² The PSP had 18 MLAs in Bihar and withdrawal of support by it can result in the fall of D.P. Rai ministry.

Even the 25 member Communist Party (CPI), a constituent of the Congress led coalition ministry in Bihar came out with a veiled threat to the Chief Minister Dargo Prasad Rai. It warned him against the growing impression that the ministry was more interested in propitiating the guiltymen of the syndicate than faithfully implementing the common minimum programme. It also pointed out that Chief Minister had not taken action against former minister and government official found guilty of grave financial irregularities by Aiyar and Mudholkar Commission.³³

The Shoshit Dal Chairman, B.P. Mandal, also threatened to withdraw support to the two month old Dargo Prasad Rai ministry if the Chief Minister did not give up attempts to include Mr. Jagdeo Prasad, an expelled member of his party in the State cabinet.³⁴

32. The Times of India, 19 March 1970.

33. Ibid., 22 March 1970.

34. The Hindustan Times, 11 April 1970.

The D.P. Rai ministry faced another crisis when two of its ministers belonging to the tribal belt of Chotanagpur threatened to quit and topple "the ministry if their grievances were not removed. Both Mr. Sumbrai (Forest Minister); Mr. Hembrua charged the Chief Minister of betrayal of breach of trust". Sumbrai said that his grievances were many and were related to the cause of the people and were interest of the State.³⁵

In the event the D.P. Rai ministry went the way of other coalition governments in Bihar since 1967. The 10 month old Congress-(R) led coalition ministry fell in Bihar assembly on a no confidence motion, jointly sponsored by the BSP, Jan Sangh, PSP, Janata Party, Congress-(O), Swatantra Party and B.P. Mandal faction of Shoshit Dal.³⁶

The Rai ministry was the third to fall since the mid-term poll in February 1969. But from the very inception there were serious dissensions among the constituents, the alteration was mainly over the allotment

35. Amrit Bazar Patrika, 13 May 1970.

36. Indian Express, 19 December 1970.

of portfolios to the representatives of the coalition partners in the Council of Ministers.³⁷ Enraged by D.P. Rai's action the dissidents charged him with petty personal motives of trying to take control of the party by imposing his own men. The dissidents demanded an immediate change in the leadership of the legislative wing of the party on the ground that Rai was indulging in corrupt practices, casteism, nepotism and favouritism, which were said tarnishing the image of the party. The Congress in Bihar had always been riven with factionalism based on casteism and caste alliances. However, what caused surprise was the intensity of factional fights in the Congress-(R). At the root of this factionalism was the continued malady of casteism, corruption and opportunism in Bihar. Neither the change in the ruling cliques, nor the split in the Congress could change the style of power politics in the State.³⁸ In fact D.P. Rai while forming his ministry has not given careful thought to providing representation to all section of the Congress. He had included his relations

37. Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit., p.368

38. Ibid.

and favouritism inspite of objections and warnings from large section of the Congress-(R). He made both the CPI and the PSP unhappy by giving disproportionate representation to the Congress-(R).³⁹ The appointment of Jagdeo Prasad created problems because he was strongly opposed to upper castes. He claimed, he would try to exterminate the upper caste people and give almost all the important offices to the backward caste men. This statement though later contradicted by him, was exploited by interested persons to whip-up a psychological fear among the upper caste people.⁴⁰

The Chief Minister's style of functioning and his preferences of backward caste officers also irritated not only his partymen, but also the other partners of coalition. He ignored the recommendation of the Coordination Committee of the parties which supported the ministry and appointed Ram Sewak Mandal, a relatively junior officer to the post of chief secretary; similarly the appointment of Kumar Bimal as chief of Rashtra Bhashe

39. Link, 13 September 1970, p.15.

40. Girish Mishra, op.cit., p.40.

Parised and of B.P. Gyani as the Director of the Public ^{Information} ~~Relations~~, further aggravated the situations. The boycott of the Coordination Committee meeting by the CPI and the PSP, the two important partners of the ruling alliance, on the appointment of Ram Sewak Mandal made Rai's position very shaky. There were resentments against Rai in the ruling Congress itself because of the manner in which he allegedly bypassed some of his cabinet colleagues.⁴¹

However a mini front within the ruling coalition, consisting of splinter groups like the rebel PSP, BKD, Shoshit Dal and the Jharkhand Party also helped in the down fall of the Rai ministry. These smaller groups were themselves riven with factionalism and most of their grievances were personal, but with resentment flourishing all arounds the chief minister lacked the courage to expose them. These splinters and regional groups, formed a mini Front to repudiate the leadership of D.P. Rai and to topple his government. Each party supporting Rai ministry extracted its price for supporting the government

41. The Times of India, 24 June 1970.

and dictated their terms to the chief minister. In such a situation for all practical purposes the chief minister's role was reduced to the maintaining a balance between caste and sub-castes rivalries in sharing ministerial offices, administrative appointments and transfers. Not surprisingly the ministry fell from the weight of these pressures.

The Sanyukta Socialist Led SVD Government:

After the fall of the D.P. Rai government, the new SVD chairman Karpoori Thakur (SSP) was invited by the Governor to form a new government.⁴² The new SVD consisted of the SSP, the rebel PSP, the Jan Sangh, the Congress-(O), the Janata, the BKD, the Swatantra, factions of the Jharkhand Party, Mandal's faction of the Shoshit Dal, Justin Richards faction of Hul Jharkhand and independent groups. This was the eighth ministry to assume office since the fourth general elections and fourth after the mid-term poll. The Governor's decision to invite Thakur to form a ministry was preceded by hectic ~~political~~ political activity in the Raj Bhawan. In a last ditch

42. Asian Recorder, 15-21 January 1970, p.9960.

battle to instal another Congress-(R) led government in the State, Bholu Paswan Shastri met the Governor of the State and put forward his claim to form a ministry with the support of 169 members. Paswan's bid however proved abortive.⁴³

Besi des Kerpoori Thakur, one member each from the SSP, Jan Sangh, Congress-(O), Janata, BKD, Mandal's faction of Shoshit Dal, Jharkhand and the Swatantra, were included in the government. However, the 11 men SVD ministry was expanded three times and its strength went up to fiftytwo. Of the constituent of the SVD, the SSP had baged 13 ministerial posts, including the Chief Minister; Congress-(O) nine, Jan Sangh eight, Jharkhand four, BKD three, ISP three, Shoshit Dal two, Hul Jharkhand one and the Swatantra one. The remaining five were independent candidates.

43. The Times of India, 22 December 1970.

Table- V

Showing party, caste/community, constituency, region and rural/urban bases of the members of the SSP led SVD Ministry

Name/Region	Caste/ Community	Rural/ Urban	Constituency
CABINET MINISTERS:			
<u>North Plains</u>			
Karpoori Thakur (SSP)	Neyee	Rural	Tajpur (Dharbhanga)
Kamal deo Narain Singh (Cong-O)	Kayastha	Urban	Purnea
Mahabir Prasad (Shoshit Dal)	Yadav	Rural	Biraul (Darbhanga)
Krishan Kant Singh (LCD)	Bhumihar	Rural	Gareakothi (Saran)
Motilal Singh Kallam (Shoshit Dal)	Yadav	Urban	Hazipur (Muzaffarpur)
Shadeo Manto (Cong-O)	Koiri	Urban	Rosera (Darbhanga)
Dusarial Baitha (Cong-O)	Dhobi (SC)	Rural	Raniganj (Purnea)
Tej Narain Yadav (SSP)	Yadav	Rural	Tribeniganj (Sharsha)
Ramanand Singh (ISP)	Rajput	Rural	Majorganj (Muzaffarpur)
Ram Briksha Ram (SS)	Chamar (SC)	Rural	Majorganj (Muzaffarpur)

South Plains

Ramanand Tiwari (SSP)	Brahmin	Rural	Shahpur (Sahabad)
Ravish Chandra Verma (Jan Sangh)	Keyastha	Urban	Monghyr (Monghyr)
Vijay Kumar Mitra (Jan Sangh)	Behari- Bengali	Urban	Bhagalpur
Jairam Giri (Independent)	Rajput	Rural	Sherghati (Gaya)
Randeo Mahto (Jan Sangh)	Koiri	Urban	Patna (East)
Sri Krish Singh (SSP)	Rajput	Rural	Chakai (Monghyr)
Chandradeo Prasad Verma (SSP)	Rajput	Rural	Paliganj (Patna)
Tripuraj Prasad Singh (ISP)	Rajput	Rural	Jamui (Monghyr)

Chotanagpur

Basant Narain Singh (Janata)	Rajput	Rural	Bagodar (Hazaribagh)
Bagun Sumbruii (Jharkhand)	ST	Urban	Chaibasa (Singhbhum)
Sushil Kumar Bage (Jharkhand)	ST	Rural	Kolibira (Ranchi)
Imanul Hai Khan (SSP)	Muslim	Rural	Bhagnara (Hazaribagh)
(Region not clear)			
Shankar Dayal Singh (BKD)	Rajput	-	-
RanKirpal Singh (Jan Sangh)	Bhumihar	-	-

Justin Richard (Hul Jharkhand)	ST	-	-
Bhola Prasad Singh (SSP)	Kurmi	-	-

MINISTER OF STATES:

North Plains

Nagina Rai (Janata)	Bhumihar	Rural	Kuchaikot (Saran)
S.M. Zatuluddin (BKD)	Muslim	Rural	Bhallia (Monghyr)
Satya Narain Biswas (Independent)	Bengali- Backward	Urban	Kothiher (Purnea)
M. Azimuddin (Independent)	Muslim	Rural	Palasi (Purnea)
Tulsi Das Mehta (SSP)	Koiri	Rural	Janedah (Muzaffarpur)
Ram Phal Choudhry (SSP)	Mallah	Rural	Jhanjarpur (Darbhanga)
Ram Jewan Singh (SSP)	Bhumihar	Rural	Beriarpur (Monghyr)
Baidya Nath Jha (SSP)	Maithil- Brahmin	Rural	Benipatti (Dharbanga)
Kashi Nath Rai (ISP)	Yadav	Rural	Masrah (Saran)
Raisul Azam (Cong-O)	Muslim	Rural	Sikta (Champaran)
Ram Chandra Sahi (Cong-O)	Bhumihar	Rural	Bararjpur (Muzaffarpur)
Ramesh Dutt Sharma	Bhumihar	Rural	Manjri (Saran)

South Plains

Sahdeo Chaudhury (Jan Sangh)	SC	Rural	Raiganj (Gaya)
Ram Rajpad Singh (Cong-O)	Kurmi	Rural	Chandi (Patna)
Ram Bilas Singh (SSP)	Yadav	Rural	Daudnagar (Gaya)
Ram Ballabh Sharan Singh (Independent)	Kurmi	Rural	Konch (Gaya)
Mahabir Chaudhury (Cong-O)	SC	Rural	Makhdampur (Gaya)

Chotanagpur

Satya Narain Dudani (Jan Sangh)	Marwari	Rural	Tundi (Dhanbad)
Lalit Oraon (Jan Sangh)	ST	Rural	Sigai (Ranchi)
Gopinath Singh (Jan Sangh)	Rajput	Rural	Garhwa (Palamu)
Kailashpati Singh (Janata)	Rajput	Rural	Dumri (Hazaribagh)
Raghunandan Prasad (Janata)	Koiri	Urban	Hazaribagh
Durga Charan Das (BKD)	SC	Rural	Chandankiari (Dhanbad)
San Bachari Mahto (Jharkhand)	Koiri	Rural	Chatshila
Bhism Narain Singh (Cong-O)	Rajput	Rural	Hussainabad (Palamu)

Sources: The Name and the Party of SSP-led SVD Ministers, Asian Recorder, 15-21 January 1971; 5-11 February 1971; 5-11 March 1971; 7-13 May 1971; 21-27 May 1971.

Caste of the Ministers, Supra, ch.III, p.109.

Constituency of the Ministers, Supra, ch.II

From the caste/community composition point of view the Karpoori Thakur ministry had almost equal number of upper and backward caste ministers. There were twenty ministers belonging to the upper castes, while the number of ministers coming from the backward castes was nineteen. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes had an equal share of five each in the ministry. There were four Muslims in the Council of Ministers. Once again, women were not selected by any of the coalition partners and they remain unrepresented in the ministry.

Just after the formation of SSP-led coalition government in Bihar, the SSP national conference adopted a resolution endorsing the party's participation in the Bihar SVD ministry at least for the time being. The resolution also asked the Chief Minister Karpoori Thakur to speed up the distribution of fallow land and agricultural land among the landless and to take steps to provide job to the jobless or in the alternative give them unemployment allowance. A Board was set up for development of the Tribal belt of the Chotanagpur

and Santhal Parganas and a Backward Classes Commission for safeguarding the interest of Harijans and other backward classes, women and Muslims. Reform should be brought about in University and the Judiciary separated from the Executive.⁴⁴

For achieving these objectives party gave the following directives: (a) collective effort should be made to dislodge the ruling party at centre and the initiative taken for socio-economic changes; (b) stress should be led on strengthening the organization; (c) the SSP should intensify anti-English and anti-casteism struggles as also the struggle for holding the price-line; (d) the party should play an effective role in making the youth, industrial labour, women, and farm labour wings powerful units for accelerating socio-economic changes; (e) the SSP should not form any political front with other parties in the legislature. For labour and land distribution struggle, it could however seek the cooperation of other parties.⁴⁵

44. The Times of India, 2 May 1971.

45. Ibid., 2 May 1971.

However the SSP-led Thakur's ministry also started facing crisis, ~~just~~ just after the five month formation, because the eight member socialist party in the State assembly, a constituent of the SVD, took the decision to pull out of the coalition, because of its reactionary character. In addition to the Socialist Party the BKD, constituent of the SVD threatened to withdraw its support, and revitalise the five party (Jharkhand, Hul Jharkhand, Shoshit Dal, BKD and ISP) mini front within the ruling Vidhaya Dal.⁴⁶

As a result the last SVD led by SSP chairman Karpoori Thakur bowed out of office without a fight in the Assembly.⁴⁷ This was the fourth ministry after the mid term poll in 1969.⁴⁸ Karpoori Thakur's ministry survived for nearly five months because he accommodated a large number of claimants by expanding the ministry practically every second week. As a result of these preoccupations administration in the State came to a standstill. No effort was made to fulfil any of the loud promises that the SSP had made and even the maintenance

46. Motherland (Delhi), 19 May 1971.

47. The Searchlight (Patna), 2 June 1971.

of law and order become chaotic. There have been many inefficient and corrupt State governments in Bihar but to Karpoori Thakur would go distinction of leading the most inept government.⁴⁸

Besides this the SVD government crumbled under the weight of its own contradictions. It was composed of such political groups whose credentials had always been in doubt. They had been maker and destroyer of many such governments in Bihar. These smaller and regional groups were themselves ridden with factions and every MLA belonging to these groups was aspiring to be a minister. Although Karpoori Thakur regularly expanded his ministry, he could not satisfy all of them. The contradiction between the self-seeking parties of the combine and the serious internal dissensions within the SSP itself could not be papered over. It was typical of the period that while only a few weeks earlier these groups had given their whole hearted support to the ministry. They were soon engaged with all their might in pulling down the same government.

48. Patriot, 2 June 1971.

The Congress-(R) Led Progressive Vidhayak Dal:

Immediately after the resignation of SSP led coalition ministry of Karpoori Thakur, Bholu Paswan Shastri the leader of the Progressive Vidhayak Dal once again formed a new government. This was the ninth Ministry after the 1967 general election. And for the third time in three years Paswan became the Chief Minister of the State. The only difference was that now he was the leader of Congress-(R) led PVD coalition government, while on earlier occasions he was the Chief Minister of the non-Congress coalition ministry.

The PVD consisted of the 105 member Congress-(R), the 25 member CPI and the 12 member PSP, besides the splinter and regional parties like the BKD, Jharkhand Party, Hul Jharkhand and the Shoshil Dal. Out of 35 members of the PVD ministry, the Congress-(R) had twenty ministerial berths. Among the other partners of the ruling coalition, the PSP got two seats and BKD two, the Jharkhand and Hul Jharkhand got one seat each and the Shoshit Dal got two posts. Four ministerial posts

were offered to the SSP defectors. There were three independent including the Chief Minister. The CPI was the only partner of the PVD which did not join the government and decided to support it from outside. This was the first time in Bihar that an independent legislator was heading a ministry.

Table- VI

Showing party, caste/community, constituency, region and rural/urban bases of the members of the PVD Ministry, 1971.

Name/Region	Caste/ Community	Rural/ Urban	Constituency
CABINET MINISTERS:			
<u>North Plains</u>			
Bhola Paswan Shastri (Chief Minister, Independent)	Dusadh (SC)	Rural	Korha (Purnea)
Ram Jaipal Singh Yadav (Congress-R)	Yadav	Rural	Soneput (Saran)
Kedar Pandey (Cong-R)	Brahmin	Rural	Nautan (Champaran)
Mrs Ram Dulari Sinha (Cong-R)	Rajput	Urban	Gopalganj (Saran)
Nagendra Jha (Cong-R)	Maithil- Brahmin	Rural	Manigachi (Darbhanga)
Baleswar Ram (Cong-R)	Dusadh (SC)	Rural	Hayaghat (Darbhanga)

Thakur Girijs Nand (BKD)	Rajput	Rural	Sheohar (Muzaffarpur)
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South Plains

Chandra Sekhar Singh (Congress-R)	Rajput	Rural	Jhajha (Mug)
Ramnandan Singh Yedav (Cong-R)	Yedav	Urban	Patna (South)
Lal Singh Tyagi (Cong-R)	Kurori	Rural	Ekanger Sarai (Patna)
Seth Hambrum (Hul Jharkhand)	ST	Rural	Borio (SP)
Khaduan Singh (BKD)	Bhumihar	Rural	Bikram (Patna)
Bipin Bihari Sinha (PSP)	Kayastha	Urban	Sarsaram (Sahabad)

Chotanagour:

Hari Charan Soy (Jharkhand)	ST	Urban	Chakradharpur (Singhbhum)
T. Mochi Rai Munda (Cong-R)	ST	Rural	Khunti (Ranchi)
Inamul Hai Khan (SSP defector)	Muslim	Rural	Baghmara (Dhanbad)

MINISTERS OF STATE:

North Plains

Nitishwar Prasad Singh (Cong-R)	Rajput	Rural	Gaighati (Muzaffarpur)
Narsingh Baitha (Cong-R)	Dhobi (SC)	Rural	Bageha (Champaran)
Remesh Jha (Cong-R)	Meithil- Brahmin	Urban	Saharasa

Ramchandra Prasad Shahi (Cong-R)	Bhumihar	Rural	Baroaj (Muzaffarpur)
Satya Narain Biswas (Cong-R)	Bengali- backward	Urban	Katihar (Purnea)
Radha Nandan Jha (Cong-R)	Maithil- Brahmin	-	-
Ramanand Yadav (Cong-R)	Yadav	-	-

South Plains

Nand Kishore Prasad Singh (Shoshit Dal)	Jurmi	Rural	Asthawan (Patna)
Hemant Kumar Jha (SSP defector)	Maithil- Brahmin	Rural	Godda (SP)
Tarvi Prasad Singh (Independent)	Rajput	Rural	Tarapur (Monghyr)
Ram Saren Prasad Singh (PSP)	Kurmi	Rural	Islampur (Gaya)

Chotanagpur

Brindawan Swansi (Shoshit Dal)	SC	Rural	Silli (Ranchi)
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DEPUTY MINISTERS

Kumbh Narain Sadan (SSP defector)	SC	Rural	Chhatapur (Sahasana)
Sidheshwar Prasad (Cong-R)	Bhumihar	Rural	Barahiya (Monghyr)
Taneswar Azad (SSP defector)	SC	Rural	Cawan (Hazaribagh)

Sources: (a) Names and Party of PVD Ministers, Bihar Gazette, July 1, 14, 1971; Asian Recorder, 1-7 October 1971; Indian Nation, 9 September 1971; Asian Recorder, 26 Nov. & 2 Dec. 1971.

(b) Caste of the Ministers - vide Supra, ch. III, p. 109.

(c) Constituency of the Ministers, Supra, ch. IV, p. 186.

The B.P. Shastri ministry was dominated by the forward castes. There were eight backward castes ministers and six belonging to scheduled castes. In spite of the considerable presence of scheduled castes they did not really influence decision making which was still very much controlled by upper castes.

However the new ruling coalition was commanding an absolute majority in the Assembly, but in the shifting sands of Bihar politics induced majorities had no permanent values, as the new Chief Minister B.P. Shastri was knowing it very well. This was the third coalition government he was heading. Neither of the previous two lasted more than a few months and nor did any good to the State. The PVD was a collection of disparate elements, its stability was depended on the support of those who have defected from some of the parties now forming the opposition. That was not the only weakness from which it suffered. The coalition was headed by one who does not belong to any of its three main constituents — the new Congress, the CPI and the PSP. These parties also could not agree on any from their own ranks to become the PVD leader and had to

choose an independent to head the government. It also never indicated much mutual confidence.⁴⁹

After the one month of its formation, the B.P. Shastri led ministry faced a major crisis, when the 27 member CPI group withdraw its support. The CPI's decision followed from the government moves to denotify the Dutta Commission of Enquiry appointed to go into charges of misuse of Bharat Sevak Samaj funds by the Union minister of Foreign Trade L.N. Misra and the former minister Mr. Lehatan Chaudhury.⁵⁰ The Commission was set up by the former SSP led ministry headed by Karpoori Thakur.

Meanwhile the Jharkhand Party had also announced that it would review its position at the party conference, at Jamshedpur and decide whether or not to continue in the coalition.⁵¹

So after remaining in power for 198 days, Paswan submitted the resignation of his third ministry to the Governor.⁵² It was the ninth ministry to fall in quick succession since the fourth general election.

49. Indian Express, 3 June 1971.

50. The Hindu, 15 July 1971

51. Ibid.

52. Asian Recorder, January 29— 4 February 1972.

Piecemeal expansion of the government, inordinate delay in the distribution of portfolios and inclusion of defectors were the tactics adopted by Paswan ministry to keep itself in power as long as possible. Expansion of the ministry and the distribution of portfolios had been the sole preoccupation of the government since it had assumed the office. Paswan had little time for anything else except entertaining the rival claims for portfolios.⁵²

From 26 February 1969 to 27 December 1971 there were five ministries in Bihar and 227 days President's rule. During this period the Congress-(R) led coalition government headed by D.P. Rai had the longest life while the third United Front government was the shortest ever ministry in the State.

From 1969 onwards the pendulum of power swung between the Congress Party bosses. After the split K.B. Sahay and the Rajput and Bhumiher caste leaders

52. The Hindu, 6 October 1971.

opted for the Congress-(O), R.L.S. Yadav switched his loyalties to the Congress-(R). Yadav and L.N. Mishra combined and tried to fill the power-vacuum created by the exist of old party bosses of the undivided Congress. R.L.S. Yadav and L.N. Mishra also played a crucial role in the installation of first Congress-(R) led coalition government in the State headed by D.P. Rai.

During this period Congress Party as well as the non-Congress parties in the State showed scant respect for democratic norms. There was hardly any difference between Congress led governments and opposition led governments, since the only consideration was need to save the ministry from being defeated in the legislative assembly. The causes that led to the fall of all ministries in this period of three years were also same bitter power struggle among the various factions and frequent defections.

Bihar had thus passed into its third spell of President's rule in five years in a bid to find a

stable government, which no party or combination had been able to provide since 1969. Thus for five years Bihar was paralysed by instability, political opportunism, casteism, unprincipled alliances corruption bringing all developmental work to virtual standstill.

C O N C L U S I O N

CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters have underscored the vital role of caste in the ^{pre}independence and post-independence period of Bihar. In the pre-independence period the upper castes dominated completely to the exclusion of other castes.

For many years after the independence the situation remained unchanged. However in subsequent years other castes were mobilized to bolster the domination of various upper castes since there was no single dominant caste which was in a position to maintain its monopoly without the support of middle or backward castes. Thus support of other caste groups became essential for the survival of the established caste groups. This led to alliances and counter-alliances. An alliance was formed against competing caste groups. Thus there emerged three or four caste groups including the two prominent, one led by Sri Krishn Sinha (Bhumihar) and the other

of Anugrah Narayan Sinha (Rajput) in the Congress Party in Bihar.

But with the growing intensity in political rivalry, the leaders of the upper caste were compelled to coopt support from the lower and other under-privileged caste groups. During the chief ministership of K.B. Sahay there was a particularly keen articulation of caste based interests of backward castes. All this resulted in a situation, where factions proliferated and in about 20 years after independence seven or eight major caste factions emerged. The main factions within the Congress Party after independence were led by the Chief Minister K.B. Sahay, the former Chief Minister B.N. Jha, the Irrigation Minister M.P. Sinha and the Education Minister S.N. Sinha besides the old factions of S.K. Sinha and A.N. Sinha. In fact not only the Congress but most other parties in Bihar have been faction ridden and plagued by casteism.

Until the early period of post-independence, the Congress leadership was confined to the upper

caste groups. But the 1967 General Election in the State of Bihar has been by far the most significant at the mass level of State politics. The 1967 General Election in Bihar indicated the trend which presaged an erosion in the monopoly of upper caste. They were challenged by those traditionally oppressed groups which were denied access to power inspite of their numerical strength. They were subjected to continuous social-political exploitation. So the course of events in Bihar after 1967 general election presents a different picture. Obscured in the crisis of instability that overtook Bihar after the Congress defeat in 1967 was the new bargaining power of the upper backwards (Yadavas, Kurmis, Koiris) and particularly Yadavas in getting a larger share of ministerial posts. The leaders of these backward castes formed their own groups and mobilized support for it. Besides, the backward caste leaders were all out to avail the first available opportunities to capitalise this situation to the maximum possible extent, because the Congress as a party had, practically lost its grip over them as they were denied first rank position in the organizational structure of the party.

During this period only Triveni Sangh (a union of Yadav, Kurmi and Koiri) was revived. All this led to a situation in which backward castes were able to assert their prominence in the electoral politics. Since no particular upper caste in Congress and non-Congress party had by now the majority of its caste members, so they had to ultimately depend on the support of backward castes for their survival in power. The changing political situation in Bihar was evident in the assertion of influence by backward castes whose claims were buttressed by the slogan of SSP (Samyukta Socialist Party) seeking for 60 per cent of the government jobs for backwards and weaker section of the society. The slogan prepared the background for the SSP leader Karpoori Thakur to mobilize support among the backward castes. So the fourth general election gave a different shape to politics in Bihar. The political articulation of backward castes encouraged the mobilization of lower middle and lower castes.

Again at the time of 1969 mid-term poll the struggle for power in the countryside expanded beyond the circle of twice-born Brahmins, Rajputs, Bhumihars to include the Yadavas and Kurmis because the 1969 split in the Congress Party at national level created an important set of opportunities in Bihar for the backward classes, as the major upper caste faction leaders deserted Mrs Gandhi Congress-(R) and joined the Congress-(O). Under this situation the Congress Party in Bihar looked for support among backward castes. As a result during this period the two coalition led by Congress-(R) had backward caste chief minister. So during this five year period the backward castes influenced politics greatly, although they could not alter the structure of domination because of persistent divisions within their ranks. Majority of backward caste only tried to maximise their gains by seeking to increase their representation in the ministry. The upper castes took advantage of this situation and coopted the dissatisfied group or individual in their faction for the perpetuation of their political hegemony. This becomes

evident from the numbers of ministers of various castes in the different coalition ministries. In almost all ministries the upper castes were fairly well represented.

Thus from the coalition period onwards the politics of Bihar is commonly regarded in terms of upper castes, the so called 'forwards' and the lower middle and lower castes the so called 'backwards'.

The period of coalition governments was significant because it led to immense instability and uncertainty. It was characterised by a desire to get rid of the Congress somehow and to form any other government in its place. This phase also witnessed the formation of amorphous non-Congress governments consisting of political parties ranging from the Jan Sangh to Socialist, Communist and desperate political elements like the Raja of Ramgarh. Bihar during this period experienced the largest number of ministerial changes.

As a matter of fact the fourth general election initiated a phase of unstable political

process in this State which had a unique patterns of its own. This unstable politics of the period was largely a consequence of leaderlessness that has afflicted the politics of the State since the death of S.K. Sinha, the first Chief Minister of Bihar. In such a situation factions and small political groups and parties began to operate as autonomous system, assuming much more power and effectiveness than they enjoyed before 1967. With no party or political group having an absolute majority in the legislature after 1967, these small groups of politicians began to operate so effectively that they could set limits to the tenure of any government that were formed with their never-to-be certain support. Casteism, corruption and nasty pursuit of ministerial berths and important portfolio was the common feature of all these unstable coalition governments. The sole pre-occupation was not with governance of the State, but keeping themselves in power so that the ministers knowing fully well that they might not last long, quickly made money in collusion with a corrupt bureaucracy.

The nature of party system plagued by factionalism accentuated the process of defection, which in turn resulted in highly unstable politics witnessed in the formation and breakdown of as many as nine governments within five years. These coalition government represented some of the most unprincipled alliances which were mainly based on the desire to share the spoils of power and patronage with little concern for any agreement over objectives, policies, programmes and priorities.

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