

**POLITICS OF CULTURAL CONTEST : RISE OF BJP
IN CHOTANAGPUR-SANTHAL PARGANA REGION
OF BIHAR**

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled **Politics of Cultural Contest : Rise of BJP in Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana Region of Bihar**, submitted by **Gangesh Kumar Jha**, is in Part-fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University and is his own work.

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

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Gangesh Kumar Jha

Gangesh Kumar Jha

CONTENTS

| | Page No. |
|--|-----------------|
| <i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</i> | |
| | 1-16 |
| INTRODUCTION | |
| CHAPTER I | 17-47 |
| Party Politics in Bihar and the BJP : An historical overview | |
| CHAPTER II | 48-69 |
| Hindutva Vs Christianity: Terrain of cultural contestation | |
| CHAPTER III | 70-85 |
| BJP in Chotanagpur-Santhal Paragana region | |
| | 86-91 |
| CONCLUSION | |
| | 92-98 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | |

***To my
Mother and Father***

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Bihar, with its deep and inherent complexities in socio-economic and political realms, provides an adequate space for scholarly works¹. With an area of 1,73,877 Sq.kms. Bihar populates 86.34 million people (next only to U.P.) in three distinct natural regions, North Bihar, Central Bihar and Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana. It is a land of paradoxes : poverty existing side by side with plenty; literacy with widespread illiteracy and so on. It remains poised in the midst of inconsistencies. Its endurance does not necessarily reflect an orientation towards dependence. The political renaissance, in recent years, leading to profound alteration in its power structure, is reflection of a 'silent' reaction by the masses to the traditional equilibrium of upper castes political exploitation², observes A.K. Lal, while analyzing the contemporary socio-political scenario of Bihar.

From the above observation, we could draw certain inferences regarding the excessive grip of caste over politics. It is, perhaps, the political economy of caste that determines the nature and content of

¹ Bihar's peculiar social political and economic condition has attracted the attention of many scholars. See the works of Vineeta Damodaran, Broken Promises, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992; Pradhan H. Prasad and Meera Datta, The Tragedy of Bihar, New Delhi, Manak Publication, 1996.

² A.K. Lal, "Bihar : Old and New", Seminar No. 450, February 1997, p. 34.

political formation in Bihar. It becomes quite obvious while analyzing political parties at various stages. Castes in Bihar can be broadly categorized in six groups, five twice-born castes constitute 13.6% (Brahmins-4.2 percent, Bhumihars-2.9 percent, Rajputs-4.2 percent, Kayasthas-1.2 percent and Banias-0.6 percent), upper Shudras or OBCs-18.7 percent (Yadavs-11 percent, Kurmis-3.6 percent and Koeris-4.1 percent), lower Shudras or extremely backward castes 32 percent, Muslims-12.5 percent, scheduled castes-14 percent and scheduled tribes-9.1 percent³.

Amongst the upper castes, the Brahmins have the highest ritual and social status, while Bhumihars and Rajputs have been landlords and major land owning castes. Kayasthas have been educationally the most advanced community in the state. In Bihar, there is a broad correspondence between the hierarchies of caste, class and power as the caste, which is economically powerful exert considerable influence on politics. Francine Frankel has postulated that, in Bihar there was a strong correlation among the factors of high status, landownership and political power⁴. Most big landowners are members of twice-born castes while most of the poor, landless labourers belong to scheduled castes.

³ Ramashroy Ray, "Bihar Politics", Indian Journal of Political Science, vol. 55, no. 3, July-September 1994, p. 224.

⁴ F. Rankel, "Caste, Land and Dominance in Bihar", in F. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao (eds.), Dominance and State Power in Modern India, vol. 1, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1989.

The economy of the state is characterized by wide spread poverty as well as disparities in wealth and income. Land is the prime resource on which rural economy is based. Bihar is no exception. Almost 80% of state's population depends on agriculture and it accounts for 45% of the state's income⁵. It is an agriculture which at 3 percent has a growth rate as high as most in the country, despite the effective failure of any public sector investment⁶. In fact, it is the agriculture which has been sustaining Bihar's economy and the reason for this high level of growth in this sector can be attributed to green revolution, the impact of which is limited to central part of Bihar and the incomplete land reforms of 1950s⁷. The oppressive caste system, it is alleged, is one of the prime reasons for economic backwardness⁸ but there are some who believe that it is economic failure that perpetrates the oppressive caste system. However, having an one sided view to this problem would be not only inadequate, also a historical fallacy. Thus, the context of the problem can be understood only in a dialectical process between the two propositions⁹.

⁵ Amrik S. Nimbran, A Poverty, Land and Violence, Patna, Layman's Publication, 1996, p. 15.

⁶ Arvind N. Das, "Still Paying Old Debts", The Telegraph, Calcutta, 6 June 1997.

⁷ Alwyn R. Rouyer, "Explaining Economic Backwardness and Weak Governing Capability in Bihar State in India", South Asia, vol. XVII, no.2, 1994, pp. 63-89.

⁸ There are many writers who support this kind of analogy. See F. Frankel, Op cit; G. Mihsra and B. Pandey, Sociology and Economic of Casteism in India : a study of Bihar, Delhi, Pragati Publication, 1996.

⁹ Arvind N. Das holds the same view point. See A.N. Das, Agrarian unrest

As far as cultural realm is concerned, Bihar presents a mosaic of various cultural traditions. Mithila is known for intellectual and cultural heritage. Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana has distinct culture. Buddhism and Jainism, once flourished in Magadh (now the central part of Bihar) region. It is Bihar where the social history of India began with the establishment of Sodal Janapads, the wandering of Buddha, and the simultaneous quest for a meaningful existence without recourse to other worldly being. Bihar was also the site for the development of Prakrit literature and some of India's greatest sculpture; where the first attempt to organize society along secular lines was made under Chanakya and Chandragupta¹⁰. Commenting on the politics of culture defined by middle cultivating castes of eastern U.P. and Bihar in late 19th and early 20th century, the historian William R. Pinch observes :

The shift from cultural politics of early 20th century to the political culture of the 1990s is not one that occurred as a sharp break at independence in 1947 but has been much more gradual, indeed most imperceptible. The implications of that shift are profound, signaling the demise of a political culture -- and the rise of politics based on democratic, demographic realities¹¹.

and Socioeconomic Change in Bihar : 1900-1980, New Delhi, Manohar Publication, 1983.

¹⁰ Ram Chandra Prasad, Bihar, Delhi, National Book Trust, 1992, pp. 40-74.

¹¹ Quoted in Walter Hauser, Swami Sahajanand and the Peasants of Jharkhand : a view from 1941, New Delhi, Manohar Publication, 1995, p. 221.

The most striking feature of contemporary Bihar is an escalation of violence and deep-rooted corruption that pervades all walks of life. In recent years the social roots of violence have been nurtured by economic factors¹². In other words, the resistance offered by the deprived sections of the community to the terror created by private armies of the big landholders leads to violence. The explicit and wider economic discrimination proves to be the primary source of exploitation in the socio, cultural domain as well. The privileged section unleashes violence in defence of the hitherto existing socio-economic order. Nevertheless the less privileged and oppressed section attempt to very often, to resisting and retaliatory measures to facilitate change of the socio-economic order. In Bihar, the rural-urban dichotomy is more vivid despite the fact that it is being one of the most ruralised state of India¹³. It is, these facts of socio-economic and cultural backwardness, led many scholars unfamiliar with Bihar's ancient glory and present political assertion of dalits and backwards, to say that Bihar has remained a cultural and intellectual black hole¹⁴.

¹² Sachchidanand, "The Changing Village", Seminar, February 1997, p. 33.

¹³ Bihar is one of those State where the percentage of rural population living below the poverty line is much higher than the national average. See The Dynamics of Employment and Poverty in Bihar (working paper), A.N. Sinha Institute, 1989, Patna.

¹⁴ It is rather superficial account of Bihar's history. See Seminar, no. 450, Feb 1997 (this whole issue is devoted on Bihar and its socio-political, and cultural problem).

Despite these obvious failures, Bihar presents a unique dynamism during election time. As Wendy Singer portrays that 'during election time, political culture is merely an external image of an underlying political process'¹⁵. Therefore, seeing an election as culture in Bihar, does not necessarily undermine its effectiveness in changing one set of rulers for another, but rather focuses on cultural image produced by that democratic process.

Notwithstanding the above observation, the underlying factors that has shaped the social fabric of Bihar has been the inter play of the problematic of an underdeveloped economy and large population, prevalence of a pattern of economic relation between landed few and the landless many, educational backwardness and caste-ridden social structure – all exerting a profound influence on the politics of the state.

The historical development of Bihar has given rise to a multi party system. All national political parties play a role in state politics. Till 1967 Congress was the dominant party in Bihar. It suffered heavily in 1967 elections and, for the first time, it was dislodged from power in Bihar. Several opposition parties that

¹⁵ Wendy Singer, "Women's Politics and Land Control in an Indian Elections" in H. Gould and S. Ganguli (eds.), India Votes, West View Press, Inc., 1992.

claimed to represent the emerging backward castes gained significance. None of these parties were in a position to form government by themselves; only a coalition government being the solution. Bihar, thus, entered a period of governmental instability. Between 1967 and 1972 Bihar endured thirteen changes in government and three period of President's rule¹⁶. Since then the politics of the state, which was conducted almost ubiquitously through the idiom of caste, converged on the broader formulation of 'Forward caste Vs Backward caste'.

Several new political formation such as Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), Swatantra Party, Bhartiya Lok Dal (BLD) etc. came forward to represent the emerging interest of backward caste group, who constitute 50 percent of total population. Backward caste preferred to rally around the socialist party and swatantra party and forwards, predominantly Brahmins, remained with the Congress. The Congress, which was simmering with discontent and infected with factionalism, became more weak. The old pattern of political dominance by the Congress could not be re-established and the reasons are said to be : the continuing political fragmentation growing out of the disarray of the Congress party organizations, the challenge by backward caste to the long standing

¹⁶ Frankel, Op cit, p. 99.

political power of forward caste, and the growing assertiveness and political mobilization of scheduled castes and other landless agricultural labourers under the Naxalite leadership¹⁷.

The other prominent parties are Communist Party of India (CPI), Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Janata Dal (JD) now JMM etc. Communist parties are the product of Kisan Sabha movement. JD (now RJD in Bihar), which inherits the legacy of JP movement, has emerged a powerful force after the implementation of Mandal Commission Report in 1990. On the other hand, the politics of the Hindu Mahasabha and the bitter memories of the partition have made the BJS/BJP a powerful party. The Jan Sangh drew its support mainly from urban based upper middle class¹⁸. It participated in the first opposition government, led by Mahamaya Prasad Sinha, which was supported by other partners such as, Praja Socialist Party (PSP) Communist Party of India (CPI) and Jan Kranti Dal (JKD).¹⁹

Since 1967, the political contest among the existing political parties became more sharp. Two new development, according to H.W. Blair, took place. The first one represented a coalescence of

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Arvind Sinha and Indu Sinha, "State, Class and 'Sena' Nexus", Economic and Political Weekly, 2 November 1996, p. 2911.

¹⁹ R. Roy, Op cit, p. 228.

the slow unfolding agricultural transformation and second more rapidly growing momentum of the backwards as a politically conscious force of Bihar²⁰. Keeping these two vital factors of transformation in Bihar society, we are now in a position to examine the post 1967 period in which the above said factors largely reflected the political arena.

When JP movement emerged in the mid 1970, as one of the most popular mass movement, it became a viable alternative political forum for the backward caste to ventilate their grievances. Under the garb of anti-congressism., JP mobilized all non-Congress political parties to fight against the rampant corruption and absolute inability of governance of the ruling congress party. In this process, Jan Sangh came into the JP movement as one of the forces to provide a 'corruption-free able government' as a non-congress political formation. However, Jan Sangh tried its best to establish its own exclusivist support base as it had nothing of this kind at that point of time. JP movement unflinchingly provided space for the Jan Sangh's hidden agenda.

With the collapse of Janata party – JP movement's political manifestation, Jan Sangh was left with no option but to go for its

²⁰ H.W. Blair, "Structural Change, the Agricultural Sector and Politics in Bihar" in John R. Wood (ed.), The State Politics in Contemporary India : Continuity or Change, Boulder, Westview Press, 1989, p. 66.

own separate political identity. Thus emerged, the Bhartiya Janata Party in early 1980.

Bihar presents a wide diversity in its socio-political and cultural realm with Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region exemplifying the best example. Situated at the southernmost tip of Bihar, Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region, popularly known as Jharkhand consists of 18 districts of South Bihar. This region, which accounts for almost half the area of Bihar, is home for more than 80 percent of the tribal and Christian population of Bihar. Of the total population, the percentage of scheduled castes (SC) and schedule tribe (ST) is about 47%, 13 million belongs to tribal communities, 6.05 million Harijans, 7.5 million belongs to backward communities. Santhal, Munda and Oraon are the major tribes of this region and Santhal alone constitute 13% of total tribal's population²¹.

Culturally this is perhaps the only area where the three major streams viz. Aryans, Dravidians and Austro-Asian have converged into a synthesized formation of culture known as 'tribal culture'²². Traditionally tribal culture has been villages based and has revolved

²¹ India 1996, Delhi, Publication Division, pp. 576-580.

²² Tara Ali Baig, "People", Times of India, (Society), Sesquicentennial issue, November-December 1988, pp. 53-55. Also see A.N. Das, "Bihar Sans its better half", Pioneer, 12 April 1998.

around agriculture, which is the backbone of their economy. Land is their principal source of sustenance and, therefore, it is rightly said that “tribe stands or fall with their lands”. The size of the landholding is one of the determinants of a person’s status in the tribal community.

‘Strict monotheism’ is their basic religious value which is apparent from the complete absence among them of any shrine, statue or graphic representation of their God²³. Their social values can be discerned in the egalitarian character of their society and the feeling of equality and closeness – demonstrated in their dances. Tribal women enjoy more freedom and autonomy in the decision making process.

The tribals inhabiting this area preferred to be called “adivasis” which literally means “original settlers”. The claim of the tribal is that it is their ancestors who were the first migrants to the Chotanagpur region. They established that own socio-cultural, economic and political system best suited to the then prevailing situation. They lived a life of peace and harmony enjoying a distinct autonomy and identity until they came in contact with the outsiders whom they preferred to call ‘dikus’ meaning both ‘exploiters’ and ‘outsiders’.

²³ Ash Narain Roy, “Jharkhand Movement : an Emerging Challenge”, Patriot, New Delhi, 6 July 1998.

The massive industrialization accompanied with the high rate of urbanization resulted in a loss of tribal's land, culture and migrant Hindus sought to impose their own values germane to tribal's way of life²⁴.

The politics of this region has more or less revolved around the issue of separate state for the tribals. The history of Jharkhand movement goes back to pre-independence era. The first pan tribal organization was started in the form of *Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj* in 1915. The Samaj was reorganized as the Adivasi Mahasabha some 23 years later under the leadership of Jaipal Singh, a Munda Christian tribe. In 1950, the Mahasabha was finally reconstituted as the Jharkhand party²⁵. In the 1957 general elections this party emerged as the leading opposition in the Bihar legislature. The party made a forceful case for a separate Jharkhand state before the State Reorganization Commission (SRC), but the commission rejected the claim for lack of viability of the region as linguistic unit. There was soon a realization among many Jharkhand leaders that they were fighting a losing battle. In the 1962 general elections, the Jharkhand party lost quite a few of its seat in the Bihar Assembly. Many Jharkhand leaders were either supported the Congress or they were coopted into its fold.

²⁴ Sudhakar Jha, "Jharkhand : a Backgrounder ", National Herald, New Delhi, 30 April 1992.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

In the meantime, Christianity came in a big way in this region. It first kept itself limited to missionary activity but soon its political motive became apparent. It actively promoted the Christian leaders through the Jharkhand party. It provided financial support to the leaders. The support to the candidates and party were linked with the demand for a protection of Church's property and security of Christians. However, the ulterior motive of the Church was to get the assurance for its conversion program from these parties. It was vehemently opposed by the RSS and Bhartiya Jan Sangh on the ground that Christianity is germane to Indian culture and ethos. It is a national and social threat to India. Thus, Hindutva brand of politics represented by RSS/BJS gained foothold in this region. Marwaris and other rich landlords supported the RSS agenda and gave liberal assistance to it spread its activities among the tribal to check the conversion.

The Jharkhand movement, which faced several ups and downs in its life, during its subsequent course of evolution, threw a number of political parties. In fact, the fate of these parties was linked with this movement. As we see, when Jharkhand party was merged with Congress party in 1963, it resulted in a severe loss to Jharkhand party and, in fact, a set back to the movement itself. Congress became the dominant party after its merger with

Jharkhand party. Though both Congress and Jan Sangh were opposed to the demand for a separate state, Jan Sangh was more explicit in its expression. Congress drew its supports mainly from the migrant Hindus and tribals. Jan Sangh's support base was limited due to its dependence on *marwaris*, *baniyas* (businessmen) – its traditional constituency – thus failed to make any head-way.

With the formation of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) in 1973, Jharkhand movement once again gained momentum. The wide support for the JMM once again assured the viability and winning capability of the Jharkhand state issue with the later generating tremendous passion among the tribals throughout the 80s. JMM was composed of three social forces tribal, sadan (non-tribal original inhabitants, mostly SCs and OBCs) and industrial labour represented by Shibu Soren, Vinod Bihari Mahato and A.K. Roy²⁶. Apart from their demand for a separate state, JMM called for thorough agrarian reform with the abolition of 'tendency' rights completely and restoration of tribals right over the management of forests. In the beginning it received massive support. However, the signs of crack appeared in the movement, when JMM decided to fight elections jointly with the Congress, resulting in a split.

The Jan Sangh, which was rechristened as Bhartiya Janata

²⁶ Ash Narain Roy, Op cit.

Party in 1980, faced a major dilemma over separate state issue. By this time, the character of Jharkhand movement had transformed. Although ethnic in nature, it had traveled a long distance on the ideological road towards regionalism, integration and assimilation with the dominant communities²⁷. The resurgence of the Jharkhand movement along with the decline of JMM – owing to the splits within it – gave time for the BJP to reassess its policy vis-a-vis the demand for a separate state, finally incorporating the same in its agenda albeit, with a different name Vananchal. Thus, BJP's emergence in Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region can be fairly termed as meteoric as is evident in the way befitting a fairy tale that it has manipulated the political fabric of the Jharkhand region.

The modest attempt here is to exclusively capture the rise of BJP in Bihar in general, and Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region in particular. This phenomenal rise provokes one to pose certain fundamental questions viz. the reasons behind the absence of a similar trajectory of persistence witnessed with the BJP's activity among the tribals, unseen in the other regions of its influence; its ability to woo the tribals despite its exclusivist nature; a need to probe into the presence or absence of any augmenting factors

²⁷ K.S. Singh, "From Ethnicity to Regionalism : A study in Tribal Politics and Movement in Chotanagpur from 1900 to 1975" in S.C. Mallik (ed.), Dissent, Protest and Reform in Indian Civilization, Shimla, IIAS, 1977, pp. 317-340.

contributing to a compromise formulae for the ideology of Hindutva specifically in the case of Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region.

The research is mostly based on secondary sources, but a few primary sources like census report, election data, and party's manifesto have been studied. The interviews with some of the leaders of BJP and RSS at Delhi and Hazaribagh and a cross section of the tribals proved beneficial in deepening the understanding of this phenomena. The discussion with local tribals during field-trips enriched our understanding of BJP/RSS/VHP activities at local level and among indigenous section.

This dissertation is organized into three chapters. The first chapter is an overview of Bihar's party politics. It examines the reason behind the BJPs rise in Bihar along with a brief summary of the general history of BJPs in India. The second chapter focuses on the RSS's activities in Jharkhand region of Bihar, how it contests other ideologies and what is the motive behind its contestation with Christianity and its offshoots. It also discusses, in detail, the mobilization techniques, strategies adopted by the RSS/VHP to woo the tribals, at the same time, consolidate itself among the non-tribals. The third chapter is a comprehensive analysis of BJPs rise in Jharkhand region of Bihar.

Chapter One

PARTY POLITICS IN BIHAR AND THE BJP: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Bihar, the geographical heart of India, is an epitome of the endless diversity of the Indian sub-continent¹. It occupies an important place on the political map of India. Bihar has three distinct geographical regions – north Bihar, south Bihar (chotanagpur-santhal pargana) and central Bihar. These three regions differ widely in resource endowments and growth constraints. North Bihar, which accounts for 140 assembly seats and 26 Lok Sabha seats, is the poorest, least urbanised and among the most backward regions of India. The mineral rich, south Bihar accounts for 83 assembly seats and 14 Lok Sabha seats. Central Bihar, which accounts for 97 assembly seats and 14 Lok Sabha seats, is essentially the agricultural region of Bihar.

In order to understand Bihar politics, one has to take into account the three factors - social, economic and political - and their combination and interaction². In Bihar, it is difficult to segregate politics and society because caste continues to affect both

¹ Sir J. Houlton, Bihar : The Heart of India, Calcutta, Orient Longman, 1949, p.1.

² Ramashray Roy, "Bihar Politics", Indain Journal of Political Science, vol. 55, no. 3, July-September 1994, p. 222.

society and politics. The connection between caste and politics in Bihar, as H.W. Blair observes, is "so close in fact to mention one has been almost automatically to speak of the other"³. Caste was previously used clandestinely but today it has taken the form of a challenge to acquire greater social and political power. It has been the most important mobilising factor in the politics. Even during the hey-days of national movements, Rajendra Prasad sought the co-operation of Kayastha, politically conscious and elite caste of Bihar. It is to be noted, that late Sachchidanand Sinha, who masterminded the realization of Bihar was a Kayastha. R.C. Prasad sums up the tendency :

for a variety of reason mainly related to superior educational and economic resources. Political life of the state, until 1967, came to be dominated by various upper caste successively : the Kayastha the Bhumi-har, the Brahmin and the Rajput. The backward and the scheduled castes, whose numbers have grown in the political institutions in recent years, have also now began to assert their position in state politics. Considering the constitutional safeguards for them and numerical logic of democratic politics, one may see their emergence as an important political force in the politics of the state as the most significant fact of current history⁴.

Politics in Bihar was in many respects different in the years following independence. At the time of independence, there were

³ H.W. Blair, "Structural Change, The Agricultural Sector and Politics in Bihar", in John R. Wood (ed.), State Politics in India : Continuity or Change, Boulder : USA, Westview Press, 1984, p. 62.

⁴ R.C. Prasad, Political Transition in Bihar, New Delhi, (Magadh University : Survey Research Unit), p. 107.

three main political formation in Bihar – the Congress party, the Hindu Mahasabha (the political ancestor of the Bhartiya Jan Sangh), and the Communist party of India (CPI). The influence of CPI and Hindu Mahasabha was marginal and their vote-gathering and seat-winning capacity was negligible. By the time of the first general election in 1952, two more national parties Kisan Majdoor Praja Party (KMPP) and Bhartiya Jan Sangh (BJS), appeared in Bihar.

From 1952 to 1967, the state politics in Bihar was characterized by the continued dominance of the Congress party. Its dominance in state politics was a characteristic of its hold over the upper castes' constituency by accomodating their formal interests a part from the support from the middle castes and lower shudras who continued to support the Congress in rural Bihar because of a mild amount of land reform measures that were initiated by successive Congress ministries⁵. Before independence, Congress in Bihar symbolized two things. As the vanguard of freedom struggle it was a joint force of diverse socio-economic interests which needed to cooperate among themselves with unity and goodwill for realizing a vital national objective. It also symbolized a power structure to be used

⁵ Girish Mishra and Braj Kumar Pandey (eds.), Sociology and Economy of Casteism in India : A Study of Bihar, New Delhi, Pragati Publications, 1996, pp. 279-280.

by different groups to secure their own separate advantages in competition and frequently in conflict with each other. But after independence the Congress was reduced simply to a power structure⁶.

After independence, under the impact of universal suffrage Bihar was constrained to pursue a reformist policy on several issues including Jamindari abolition. In fact, Bihar was the first state to spearhead one of the fundamental devices to alter the social structure – land reform. However, it is an irony that it was also the first to end up as a failure in clinching these tasks. The major beneficiary of these reforms were the middle peasants who, in fact, were the middle castes (upper backward caste such as Kurmi, Koeri, Yadav) and the large occupancy tenants. According to one estimate, about 10 percent of the total cultivated area passed from control of the largest landlords into the hands of intermediate size cultivators⁷.

⁶ R. Roy Op. cit. P. 229.

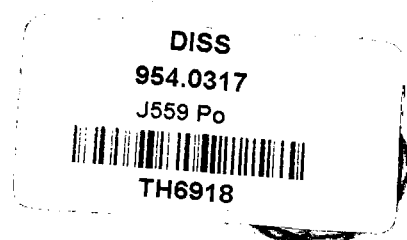
⁷ Pradhan H. Prasad, "Caste and Class in Bihar", Economic and Political Weekly, Annual Number, 1997, p. 483.

Change in economic status shifted the locus of power and it gave these backward castes a better leverage in politics. They, now, can no more be neglected in politics. The first sign of crack appeared when the Congress party lost to the combined opposition in 1967. Since then, the Congress could never recover its original strength. Bihar, thus entered into an era of coalition government. In 1967, there were as many as 13 parties in Bihar. While the share of Congress vote was declining, the left and right parties have been steadily gaining strength⁸. This period saw the emergence and progressive acquisition of strength by the Jan Sangh. Jan Sangh won 26 seats in 1967 and 34 in the 1969 assembly election. Similarly, the socialist parties have been gaining at the cost of the Congress. They won 86 seats in 1967 and 70 in 1969. Similar is the experience of left parties. While the main line of political cleavage in Bihar has remained along a Congress-anti Congress fault-line, both political groupings have been deeply fragmented, plagued by numerous caste-based factions engaged in serious infighting and reeked by defections for personal gains and advantages.

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The Bhartiya Jan Sangh appeared on the Bihar's political scene just before the first general elections to fill up for all practical purposes the void created by the disappearance of Hindu Mahasabha. The

⁸ R. Roy Op. Cit, p. 229.



communal riot in Calcutta in 1946 provided an opportunity to the RSS to work on the feelings of the Bihari Hindus returning from Bengal and it did succeed in fomenting communal riots in some areas of Bihar. But this did not cut much ice in Bihar as it has 'its own traditional and school of ancient learning'. Success came the way of the BJS in the 1967 assembly election. It showed a significant increase in seat share as well as vote share (see table 1.1)¹⁰.

Table 1.1

BJS Performance in Bihar Assembly Elections, 1952-67

| Assembly elections in Bihar | Total seat | Contested | Won | Lost deposits | Percentage of votes |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1952 | 330 | 47 | 0 | 41 | 1.18 |
| 1957 | 318 | 29 | 0 | 22 | 1.19 |
| 1962 | 318 | 75 | 3 | 61 | 2.77 |
| 1967 | 318 | 270 | 25 | 192 | 10.47 |

⁹ Ramashay Roy, "Caste and Political Recruitment in Bihar", in Rajni Kothari (ed.), Caste in Indian Politics, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1962, p. 233.

¹⁰ V.B. Singh and Shankar Bose, Data Handbook on Vidhan Sabha Elections (1952-1985), (vol. 4, The North, Part II), Sage Publication, 1988.

Two factors played an important role in improving BJS electoral fortunes between 1952 to 1967. The emerging balance of caste alignments after the death of Shree Krishna Singh, alienated the powerful Bhumihar community from the Congress. While a large number of middle and small Bhumihar peasants tilted towards the socialist, a section of erstwhile Jamindars and rich peasants veered round Jan Sangh. It is said that two Bhumihar leader of the BJS namely Kailash Pati Mishra and KBPN Sinha of Rami Bigha, played a key role in this¹¹.

There was another factor that helped Jan Sangh to advance its electoral fortunes. It was the attitude of the other non Congress parties - to profit by the prevailing discontent against the Congress. Ram Manohar Lohia came out with his thesis of "anti-congressism" and tried to combine all the disparate forces and elements hostile to the Congress. In Bihar seat adjustment took place among them. The CPI an important ally in non-Congress faction came out with its helpful thesis of the existence of two wings : "One progressive and other reactionary in Jana Sangh, advocating the need of combining with the progressive faction led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee in order to isolate Balraj Madhok and his "reactionary faction"¹².

¹¹ G. Mishra and B.K. Pandey, Op. Cit, p. 324.

¹² Hinustan Times, New Delhi, 21 October 1967.

In 1967, for the first time, BJS participated in government led by Mahamaya Prasad Sinha. It was a coalition government led by Jan Kranti Dal (JKD). The other partners were Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and Communist Party of India (CPI) etc. Initially, there was some hesitation on the part of Jan Sangh which was not pleased with the idea of joining a coalition with socialist and communists. Rather than find itself with the congress in opposition, the Jan Sangh accepted to the SSP condition. Two Jan Sangh legislators were induced as cabinet rank ministers and one as minister of state.

It became increasingly difficult for Mahamaya Prasad Sinha the then chief minister, to run the government due to pulls and pressure from the partners. It faced with substantial defections including three elected on the Jan Sangh ticket, when the Soshit Dal was formed by a former SSP minister. The Jan Sangh ministers opposed tooth and nail the proposed land reforms measures and the abolition of Tata's Jamsedhpur Jamindari rights in Jamshedpur.

The Jan Sangh disagreed with the provision in the agreed policy of the coalition which accorded Urdu as the status of second official language in Bihar. There were also acrimonious exchanges between the Communists and the Jan Sangh especially after a series of

communal disturbances in Ranchi district. By the defection of its three member, the strength of the Jan Sangh in Bihar dropped from 26 to 23 at the end of 1967.

The coalition government lasted one year. After the 1969 election, a coalition government was again formed in Bihar. But this time BJS choose to stay away from the coalition. The acrimony created in 1967 with other constituents of Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (SVD) on the issues of land reforms and Urdu did not cool down. But it benefited from that alliance as it helped it greatly in expanding its support base. Its consistent opposition to land reform measures and Urdu improved its image among the conservative section of upper castes.

In the 1969 assembly elections it contested in 303 segments, won 34 seats with 15.6% of the votes polled. This was a significant improvement in both vote-share and seat share in respect to the 1967 assembly results¹³. In 1972 assembly elections, BJS contested 270 seats, won 25 seats with 11.7% of votes polled. This time, it showed a decrease in both seat share and vote share. Between 1952 to 1969, there was a progressive decline in both Congress and Socialists votes in all the regions in Bihar. BJS, it seems, gained at their expense in

¹³ V.B. Singh and S. Bose, Op. Cit, p. 25.

these regions (see the table 1.2).

Table 1.2

Percentage of votes polled by three major political formation in Bihar Vidhan Sabha elections, 1952-1969

| Political Parties | Region | 1952 | 1957 | 1962 | 1967 | 1969 |
|--------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Congress Party | North Bihar | 47.7 | 46.4 | 43.3 | 33.8 | 35.6 |
| | Central Bihar | 41.8 | 44.6 | 45.6 | 34.6 | 28.6 |
| | South Bihar | 21.8 | 32.2 | 43.6 | 31.4 | 24.1 |
| Socialists | North Bihar | 28.4 | 19.3 | 26.4 | 29.3 | 23.1 |
| | Central Bihar | 25.3 | 18.7 | 19.1 | 25.2 | 17.9 |
| | South Bihar | 7.9 | 5.0 | 4.3 | 7.9 | 9.4 |
| Bhartiya Jan Sangh | North Bihar | 1.2 | 1.5 | 2.3 | 8.6 | 14.1 |
| | Central Bihar | 1.8 | 1.5 | 4.8 | 11.8 | 16.2 |
| | South Bihar | 1.1 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 18.2 | 24.8 |

Source : CSDS Data Unit, Delhi.

The Jan Sangh's appeal has been to those who held authority in the old social order the Rajput warrior castes, the former landlord classes like Bhumihar and to the middle propertied strata, particularly

the merchants in some areas and the newly urbanised lower middle classes. The Jan Sangh had little influence upon lower social strata either in towns or in rural areas both in Bihar and U.P¹⁴.

In Bihar it appeared that Jan Sangh could win over a substantial section of landed interests besides the banias in towns. Jan Sangh attracted in particular, the Bhumihar caste because of its opposition to land reform measures after zamindari abolition and promotion of Kailash Pati Mishra, a Bhumihar to leadership¹⁵. In its long term perspective in mobilising various other social groups, and after a good deal of analysis it came to the conclusion that it could win over upper castes in general and Kayasthas in particular to its side.

BJS, now concentrated on the Kayasthas, who were more vulnerable to its influence, for various reasons. To begin with, Kayasthas had been gradually alienated from the Congress since 1962. The refusal to grant another term of Presidency to Rajendra Prasad had angered them. The ouster of K.B. Sahay from power and ultimately from the Congress added fuel to the fire. Jayaprakash Narayan had given respectability to the Jan Sangh and the RSS by associating them with the famine relief work in 1967 and the handing

¹⁴ Craig Bagster, Jan Sangh : A Biography of An Indian Political Party, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1969.

¹⁵ G. Mishra and B.K. Pandey, Bihar Me Jan Sangh (in Hindi), New Delhi, Ajanta Publication, 1969.

over the conduct of his movement for "Total Revolution" in 1974-75. In fact, he became a bridge between the Sangh Parivar and his castemen.

Besides this, there was a strong economic reason for their being attracted towards the Jan Sangh. Job-reservation initiated by Karpoori Thakur posed the greatest threat to them. They did not have substantial landed property and traditionally they had depended on government jobs, medical and legal professions for their livelihood. Industrial entrepreneurs were very few among them. They seemed to be the most endangered species to whom Jan Sangh appeared to be a saviour as it opposed job-reservation on the basis of caste. Thakur Prasad, a leader of Jan Sangh played an important role in cultivating the Kayasthas. Since then the, Kayasthas have been overwhelmingly with the Sangh Parivar¹⁶.

In the period between 1975-1977 BJS emerged as a distinct political entity in state politics. The whole agitation against emergency was crystallised into the JP movement in Northern India. Bihar was the epicentre of this movement. Beginning in 1974 as a student agitation for urgent economic and educational demands, it soon acquired political overtone, largely under the influence of Jai Prakash Narayan, popularly known as JP. JP formed a grand alliance of non-

¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 360-361.

congress and non-communist parties such as the congress (O), the socialist party, the Jan Sangh etc. to launch the movement in an organised manner. The agitation was carried out under the banner of Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti (BCSS) formed in 1971 of various students organisations of different political parties¹⁷.

Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) the student wing of BJS/BJP was the major partner of this alliance. Party-wise one third of the members of BCSS belonged to the ABVP. The movement thus was dominated by RSS-Jan Sangh in particular. Very soon, ABVP took the lead in charting out the subsequent course of agitation. Jayaprakash Narayan was so impressed by their efforts in the agitation that he went to address several RSS meetings as well as ABVP led morchas¹⁸. Indeed, the collaboration between JP and the RSS and its affiliate BJS in the Bihar movement was primarily due to the Hindu Nationalist search for a leader capable of integrating them into a legitimate politics.

Although, this did not result in the immense improvement in its electoral prospects in subsequent elections but it certainly helped BJS to earn respectability and provided a bigger political space for BJS in

¹⁷ Ghanshyam Shah, Protest Movement in Two Indian States: A Study of Gujrat and Bihar Movements, Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1977, p. 98.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

the state's political activities. In May 1977, a coalition government led by Karpoori Thakur, was formed. The Congress (O), Jan Sangh, BKD, various socialist parties and Congress for democracy emerged to form Janata party. BJS was absorbed into the Janata Party. Then onwards it had no independent entity and was a part of broad Janata coalition.

In the assembly elections of 1977, Congress seats slumped from 168 to 57 and the percentage of votes from 33.1 to 23.6 percent. The Janata Party bagged as many as 214 seats, a record in the state since 1957. It had reaped the benefits of an unprecedented anti-congress wave generated by the excesses of the emergency and the disastrous policies pursued by the myopic state Congress governments.

The Janata Party formed the government in the state in which BJS also participated. The Jan Sangh faction of the Janata Party was the most organised one. Its parent body – the RSS- continued to regulate and guide its activities. But, the ruling Janata Party was a divided house from village level to national level. As a result of the break-up of Janata Party in 1980; BJS, now rechristened as BJP decided to keep itself away from the Janata formation.

BJP in General

On 5 April 1980, BJP was established as a political party. In its short span of life, it has earned many distinctions. In 1996, it became the single largest party in the Lok Sabha. In 1998, it assumed power at centre. In its short-span of life BJP has experienced many ups and down.

BJP's growth as a national party has been attributed to three momentous leaps, which came in its life after the independence. The first major leap came in 1967 when for the first time, Jan Sangh, the earlier incarnation of BJP, crossed 20 percent marks in some of the Hindi speaking states, like Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and improved upon its position in other core states and registered a significant presence in Bihar.

The second leap came forward in 1977-80, when it shared power with the Janata Party, though short-lived, at the centre and in some of the states. The most important feature of this phase is that it legitimised the Jan Sangh stream in Indian politics. The third leap in its short life arrived in 1989 when it entered into seat-adjustment with the Janata Dal raising its tally from 2 to 85. And then, it never looked back (see table 1.3) ¹⁹.

¹⁹ Yogendra Yadav, "Electoral Prospect", Seminar, no. 417, May 1994, pp. 59-63.

Table 1.3

BJP's performance in Lok Sabha Election (1980-1998)

| Year | Seat Won | Votes (%) |
|------|----------|-----------|
| 1980 | 15 | 8.6 |
| 1984 | 2 | 7.4 |
| 1989 | 85 | 11.4 |
| 1991 | 120 | 20.1 |
| 1996 | 161 | 20.3 |
| 1998 | 177 | 25.0 |

Source : CSDS data unit, Delhi

Rise of BJP can be seen in two phases : Pre-1985 and in post 1985. It adopted the Gandhian socialism of ex-Janata Party and maintained a distance with the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS). It worst-ever electoral failure in 1984 election, which was fought in the wake of assassination of Indira Gandhi was interpreted to mean a negative vote to its policy of Gandhian Socialism. Gandhian

Socialism was effectively jettisoned after 1985 and incorporated on its place, the principle of Integral Humanism, propounded by Deen Dayal Upadhyay, which sees things in totality.

After its defeat in 1984 elections, the party faced an identity crisis. BJP, now, devoted considerable attention to the question of political identity, which had got blurred. It was seen as a replica of Janata party. L.K. Advani became the president of party in 1986. Party organisation was toned up take a new role, which was :

.... Each political party, which aspires for socio-economic change through political power, has to play a twin role in politics. It has to take to correctional 'policies' and simultaneously undertake creative work in shaping the destiny of society.²⁰

Acting upon these perceptions, BJP took a series of decisions. These included the restoration of integral humanism as the party's basic doctrine and the adoption of policies such as the repeal of Article 370 of the constitution, granting special status to Kashmir, and support for an Indian nuclear weapon programme. It revived its old link with the RSS. Hindutva was brought back on its political agenda²¹.

²⁰ B.K. Kelkar, "BJP and the crisis of Political alignment" Organiser 10 Apr 1988.

²¹ James Chiriyankandath, "Tricolour and Saffron : Congress and the Neo-Hindu Challenge", in S. Mitra and James Chiriyankandath (eds.), Electoral Politics in India, Delhi, Orient Longman, 1996, p. 57.

In its political activity, BJP is helped by many organisations linked with it. Most prominent among them are : Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal.

The BJP is symbiotically linked with the Rashtriya Swayamasevak Sangh (National Voluntary Corp) and invariably with all the others organisations linked with it. The RSS was established in 1925. It is the institutional core of Hindu nationalism. At present, the RSS has more than eighty organisations linked with it. Most of the stalwarts of the BJP have been associated with the RSS. It is the ideological face of the BJP. Since its inception, membership of the RSS has increased manifold (from bare 99 in 1925 to 25 lakh in 1996).²² In its seventy years of existence, the RSS, has built up a solid network of activists. Its success lies in its ability to draw upon large number of legacies which have been an enduring feature of diverse reform movements and nationalistic articulations throughout history of modern India'.²³ Though it does not participate in the election, its increasing foray into politics was more than clear during 1996 elections. when for the first time, in its history, it issued an appeal to the electorate to vote for the "Hindutva Forces", terming the election, a

²² India Today, 15 Dec. 1996, p. 71.

²³ Aijaj Ahmad, Lineage of the Present, New Delhi, Tulika Prakashan, 1996, p. 278.

“turning point in the history”²⁴.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) is a Hindu umbrella organisation linked with RSS. It was formed in 1964 by S.S. Apte, the pracharka of RSS. It is involved in various activities related with the Hindu cause. It became notorious, when, it organised the Ram Janmabhoomi movement in Ayodhya and mobilised Hindus from all over the country to orchestrate the demolition of Babri-Masjid. Its unique mobilisation strategy lies in the fact, that it launched a `nationwide campaign drawing heavily on Hindu motives, symbols and cultic elements’²⁵. For the mobilisation of Hindu masses, dynamic Hinduism was adopted and a multitude of techniques was developed. It challenged the established political order and legitimised the political power in metaphysical term. VHP uses `Hindu symbols and Hindu Phenomenon (milk drinking gods in recent times) a modernist shape in to formulation of its aim and in order to spread its message’.

Bajrang Dal is the most militant Hindu Youth organisation linked with the RSS, and is the muscular face of BJP. It became notorious when its members actively participated in the demolition of Babri-Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992. Thus, BJP possesses and exceptionally efficient organisational network. It is evident from its

²⁴ Op. cit , India Today, p. 74.

²⁵ Eva Hellman, “Dynamic Hinduism”, Seminar, May 1994, No. 417, p. 56.

functioning and within a short span of fifteen years its membership has increased three times (from 10 lakh in 1981 to 30 lakh)²⁶.

Long derided as the Brahmin-Bania party of the Urban areas, BJP has come a long way in expanding its social base. It has developed a substantial rural base, which the Jan Sangh lacked. But in terms of proportion BJP is still as Urban as its predecessor. The above tables clearly shows that BJP has, not only retained its hold on traditional voters, "a cluster of Urban groups, small industrialists, traders and people on the lower rung of the professional administrative hierarchies²⁷" but also spreaded out in other strata of society. The most significant gain of the party in the recent years is its popularity among the OBC voters and in 1998 it commanded the highest percentage of votes among all the major parties (see table 1.4). The shift is visible if we look at the state of UP and Bihar where the largest number of parties functionaries are, now, recruited from upwardly mobile backward caste. BJP has also increased its base among the SCs and STs. It has gained the maximum number of seats from the tribals pockets of Bastar and Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana.

²⁶ Op. cit., India Today, p. 71.

²⁷ B.D. Graham, Hindu Nationalist and India Politics, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 158.

Table 1.4

Parties support base (% , caste wise) between the two elections (1996-1998)

| Caste/Year | BJP | | Congress (I) | | UF | |
|-------------|------|-------|--------------|------|------|------|
| | 1996 | 1998* | 1996 | 1998 | 1996 | 1998 |
| Upper Caste | 40 | 56 | 26 | 29 | 6 | 11 |
| OBC | 24 | 42 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 |
| Dalit | 13 | NA | 31 | NA | 14 | NA |
| Adivasi | 18 | 25 | 39 | 43 | 8 | 16 |
| Muslim | 2 | 7 | 31 | 39 | 34 | 30 |

Source : CSDS Data Unit

***BJP and its allies**

Until recently, BJP's support was concentrated in the north Indian states of UP, MP, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi, which is also called the "saffron - belt"²⁸. It was the same area where BJS had some influence in the past. To become an all India party, BJP needed a wider support base and hence emerged a fruitful strategy of forging alliances with the smaller, at the same time powerful regional parties. It became possible when BJP put 'Hindutva' on the backburner. Congress was the main opponents to

²⁸ Y. Yadav, Op.cit.

these regional parties, which helped BJP to ride on 'anti-congressism'. Thus, BJP has entered into some new area of influence (see table 1.5) and further consolidated itself in its traditional area of influence.

Table 1.5

Region-wise Performance of BJP (in terms of Loksabha Seats)

| North (151) | | | South (132) | | | East (142) | | | West (118) | | |
|----------------|------|------|----------------|------|------|---------------|------|------|---------------|------|------|
| 1991 | 1996 | 1998 | 1991 | 1996 | 1998 | 1991 | 1996 | 1998 | 1991 | 1996 | 1998 |
| 59 | 62 | 86 | 5 | 6 | 50 | 71 | 19 | 53 | 49 | 72 | 61 |

Thus, BJP has made both longitudinal and latitudinal – social and regional expansion and, now, it is a political alternative to the Congress (I). Having analyzed the BJP in its pan Indian nature, it is now pertinent to examine the genesis and growth of BJP in Bihar state.

BJP in Bihar

The rise of BJP across the country was also reflected in Bihar. The BJP had been able to increase its share of vote from 12 percent in 1989 to 20 percent in 1996, largely at the expense of the Congress whose share fell from 28 percent to 11 percent (see table 1.6) ²⁹. The BJP was posing a challenge for the second position, which it nearly managed to secure, since in many constituencies its candidate came second.

Table 1.6

BJP and Congress share of votes during 1980-98 elections in Bihar

| Year/Party | 1980* | 1984 | 1985 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1995 | 1996 | 1998 |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| BJP | Did not exist | 6.9 | 7.5 | 11.7 | 11 | 15.9 | 12 | 20.54 | 21.30 |
| Congress (I) | 36.7 | 51.8 | NA | 28.1 | 24.3 | 24.2 | 16.5 | 11.1 | 7.01 |

Source : CSDS Data Unit

* In 1980 both Lok Sabha and Vidhansabha elections conducted simultaneously. This particular result is for Lok Sabha.

²⁹ Documented compiled from the results : frontline 17 May, 1996; 28 June 1996; 16 Mar. 1998

In the early 1990s two things happened simultaneously : the Ayodhya campaign and implementation of Mandal Commission Report. Congress (I) government's decision to open the lock of Babri-Masjid heightened the communal passion throughout the country and Bihar was no exception. In fact, Bihar experienced the worst ever riot in its history, at Bhagalpur since partition , in which more than 1000 persons were massacred³⁰. It continued for one whole week. It proved the inability of then Congress (I) government to check the deteriorating inter community relations in Bihar. The Congress government became more vulnerable as the whole state particularly its central part was under the grip of Naxal organizations. There was a parallel government running in this area making governance redundant. It further compounded the problem for the Congress³¹.

In the early 1989, Congress's decision to extend further the quota meant for SCs and STs, resulted in a violent class between the upper caste students and police in Patna as well as several other areas of Bihar. Patna University, the premier University of Bihar was forced to suspend its classes indefinitely³². In the

³⁰ Unofficially more than 2000 persons were reported to be massacred and the worst affected were the Muslims. This particular district is known for its handloom (silk) industry, which employs most of the Muslims.

³¹ Arvind Sinha and Indu Sinha, "State, Class and 'Sena' Nexus", Economic and Political Weekly, 2 November 1996, pp. 2908-2912.

³² The Hindustan Times, Patna, 2 February 1989.

meantime, opposition parties were advancing further to forge an alliance that had to become a political alternative to the ruling Congress (I). Janata Dal took a initiated finally paving the way for opposition unity in 1989. BJP was the partner of this alliance led by the Janata Dal. They fought 1989 election together and the oppositions performance was more than expected. Janata Dal gained the most by cornering 31 seats followed by BJP which won 5 seats out the of total 54 seats in Bihar.

In the meantime, VHP launched its Kar seva programme to liberate the so-called Ram Mandir. In almost all the villages of the state, Ram Shila Pujans were performed, the timing of which was tactically fixed during the Dussera-Diwali festival period, hardly a month before the announcement of the Lok Sabha polls. This was aimed at achieving the twin objectives of causing a Hindu backlash in the BJPs favour and alienating the Muslim from the Congress (I) due to its dithering stands on Ayodhya issue. This strategy yielded rich electoral dividends to the BJP in Bihar. It made in roads into the upper caste constituency of Congress (I) in Bihar.

V.P. Singh government's decision to finally implement the recommendation of Mandal Commission reserving a substantial proportion of government jobs for backwards in central government,

evoked similar violent reaction from the upper caste in Bihar. It posed threat to the upper caste's hegemony students led by the ABVP (the most powerful students organization in Bihar)³³ sharpened the differences between the backward and forward castes. Dalits, the most brutalized and oppressed section in Bihar, supported their backwards brethren who were also deprived of the benefits that is associated with the high ritual and social standing of forward castes.

In 1990 BJP launched a Rath Yatra from Somnath in Gujrat to Ayodhya in UP. Wherever, it passed, it left a trail of communal riots. Finally, it reached Bihar where the Laloo government stopped the Rath Yatra by arresting L.K. Advani for as other wise it would have become uncontrollable, once riots started. It should be noted that Bihar is the most volatile state in terms of intercommunity relation³⁴ despite the fact that Bihari Muslims economic condition is not better than the other backward castes. Elite among the Muslims had already migrated to Pakistan after the partition, leaving poor and Muslims in Bihar³⁵.

Its impact was largely visible in the 1990 State Assembly and

³³ Ghanshyam Shah, Op.cit., p. 111.

³⁴ Every year on the occasion of Ramnavami riot occurs. It has become a normal feature.

³⁵ Vineeta Damodaran, Broken Promises, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992.

1991 Lok Sabha Election of Bihar. In such a surcharged atmosphere of the state, BJP made Ayodhya and Janata Dal 'Mandal' its poll plank. *Mandal* reigned supreme over *Mandir* in Bihar. The 1991 election like a referendum on Mandal issue. Congress wavered on these issues which cost it dearly in the elections. Finally, Janata Dal emerged victorious. BJP got a marginal success. The partial response to the BJP in Bihar in 1991 election, according to H.A. Gould was 'due to numerically extensive, politically conscious middle castes population and an absence of province wide communal controversies such as afflicted UP'. Moreover *mandal* has symbolic significance in Bihar equivalent to *mandir* in UP (UP was the nerve centre of the Ram Janambhoomi movement), for it was, after all, B.P. Mandal, one of Bihar's leading Yadav politician (and briefly chief minister in february 1968) who authored the Mandal commission report³⁶. In demographic terms, backward castes are to Bihar what *Brahmins* and *Thakur* (Rajputs) are to UP (who constitute 20 percent of total population of UP). Their numbers and political clout are formidable³⁷.

Bihar did not experience a communal riot on the eve of Ramnavami (Hindu festival) in 1990 for the first time. It proved the

³⁶ H.A. Gould, "Mandal, Mandir and Dalits : Melding class with ethnoreligious conflicts" in H.A. Gould and S. Ganguli, India Votes, Boulder, West View Press, Inc., 1993, pp. 292-340.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

acumen of Laloo Prasad Yadav. It made him the messiah of the Muslims and he succeeded in forging a durable alliance between Muslims and Yadavs. The political alliance between the backward caste and Muslim in Bihar and UP has emerged as a formidable force and both the BJP and the Congress have started feeling the brunt. Faced with these circumstances, the BJP's elitist pitched revivalistic ideology found a far less receptive audience among the Bihar electorate, particularly in early 1990s.³⁸

BJP's strength in Bihar reflected the social profile of its electorate. It remained relatively unattractive to OBC, especially to the Yadavs, who form such an influential group in Bihar and are active since 1960s in the Bihar politics. According to a survey conducted by Bihar group at the CSDS, only 13.7% of the Backward castes voters supported the BJP against the identical figure for the congress and 49.8% of Janata Dal in 1991 election³⁹.

BJP felt tremendous pressure from its backward caste MLAs to clear its stand on the reservation issue. They demanded a proportional representation in the organisational set up. In 1991 elections, the ticket distributed for Loksabha was - 21 upper caste and 17 BCs and 9 SCs. Political observers commented that it proved to be

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Collected from CSDS, New Delhi. See also India Today, 15 May 1995.

counterproductive in the state where OBCs form a majority (50.7 percent). Just before the 1991 election, a vertical split took place in BJP when its 12 OBCs MLAs defected to the Janata Dal. BJP failed to respond to new the social currents which was prevailing in the post mandal masjid Bihar. Govindacharya's advocacy of 'social engineering' was aimed at increasing the support base of the party among the backward castes, the schedule castes and the schedule tribes⁴⁰. BJP also lacked a clear-cut political projection and its organisation was in disarray. It lacked young and dynamic leaders in the state.

The party's support base was very limited. Without incorporating the backward castes, it was impossible to form a government on its own⁴¹. In the meantime, Janata Dal splitted on the eve of 1995 assembly election. The splinter group named Samata party was led by Nitish Kumar another backward caste leader. The Samata party has good following among Kurmis and Koeris who comprise about 3.6 and 4.1 percent of the population respectively. The *Yadavisation* of the Janata Dal caused resentment among the *Kurmis* who aspired for the leadership of the OBCs⁴².

⁴⁰ India Today, 6 May 1988.

⁴¹ After 1991 debacle, party decided to give more representation to the backward caste in its organizational set up and thus, Sushil Kumar Modi was made leader of the party in legislative assembly, Janardhan Yadav appointed General Secretary of the party.

⁴² Indu Sinha and Arvind Sinha, "Setback to Political Arrogance", Economic and Political Weekly, 29 June 1996, pp. 1651-1652.

The OBC is not a monolithic structure but comprises of numerous castes, of which the Yadavs and Kurmis formed the most dominant ones. In the caste hierarchy, the Kurmi belongs to the backward caste as they are considered to be ritually inferior, but the Kurmis in Bihar are economically well off. The Kurmis realizing their political and economic importance, have staged to assert themselves clamouring for a better footing *vis-à-vis* the Yadavs. The failure of CPI (ML) and Samata party experiment shows the contradiction inherent in such type of alliance between the oppressed and oppressor as these neo-rich Kurmis, who are fighting with Naxalites in most parts of Central Bihar cannot vote for a party detrimental to its interest. At the same time, the Kurmis were very much conscious of their middle class status. Arvind Narain Das points out rightly that the Samata party phenomenon has much deeper social, economic and political meaning than a simple minded reaction to an overzealous Yadav chief minister. They are equally concerned about civil society⁴³. Samata party could muster the support of the *Kurmis, Koeris, Baniyas* and section of the MBC as well. The alliance was a shot in the arm for both BJP and Samata party. Therefore, it could spread its influence in north and central part of Bihar. In 1998 elections, the combined share of BJP and Samata crossed the combined share of RJD and JD or even

⁴³ Arvind N. Das, "Still Paying Old Debts", The Telegraph, 6 June 1997.

Congress and its allies. Also BJP's percentage of vote share exceeds the percentage of forward and urban middle class, normally thought of as the sole BJP support base (see table 1.7).

Table 1.7

Votes won by major parties and alliance as a proportion of total valid votes, Loksabha elections 1998 (in %).

| | BJP | BJP allies | Congress | Congress allies | UF | Others & Independents |
|-------|------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| Bihar | | | | | | |
| | 21.30 | 14.82 | 7.01 | 25.51 | 13.62 | 17.74 |

This alliance has been successful in mobilizing the masses on some pertinent issues like corruption and nepotism. On fodder scam, which rocked the entire state in 1996, it had its impact on the 1996 and subsequent elections. The alliance has emerged as the most successful alliance in the 1990s in Bihar. The success is also attributed to the fact that the Congress has declined sharply and other communist parties are disorganized. Thus, a new feature of Bihar politics in the 1990s period is the emergence of BJP, which is being recognized as the only alternative force.

Chapter Two

HINDUTVA VS CHRISTIANITY : TERRAIN OF CULTURAL CONTESTATION

When Vasco de Gama triumphed in finding a sea-route to India in 1498, by landing on the Western coastal town, Kozhikode (Calicut), a new era had begun in the subcontinent. It was not simply an arrival of a western traveller; it was indeed the beginning for the foundation of world trade and modernity. After having succeeded in establishing a sea-route to India, Christian missionaries from Europe particularly English, Dutch, Portuguese and German missionaries began to come to India in order to spread the message of the Gospel.

By virtue of its certain liberating principles, Christianity in the beginning, was associated with modernity. The very foundation of modernity - freedom, liberty, equality, fraternity assumed primary place in the early stage of missionary's activities. Moreover, when the missionaries began working among the tribal people of the some of the very backward regions, Christianity received enormous amount of support, because the tribal people were accorded a very low status in the Hindu social order. Determining a person's future purely on the ascriptive status alienated a large chunk of the tribal population. So, the incidental, nevertheless, active presence of Christian missionaries

in the tribal region ensured a massive support base for Christianity.

The German mission was the first to begin its activities in Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region by the year 1854¹. Prior to the arrival of the missionary society founded by John Baptist Gossner in Ranchi, in November 1895² there were no educated tribals in Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana. The members of the missionary society at first established mission station in important towns and from this mission's stations they went around the towns and villages preaching the word of God. After 1857 revolt, British government did not interfere in the work of the missionaries. Having enough funds in their hands, the missionaries started chains of schools, dispensaries in the tribal areas. By 1900, the number of Roman Catholic mission grew phenomenally; from 15,000 converts in 1887 to 71,270 in 1990³. In 1971 the total population of Christians in Chotanagpur was 5,34,667⁴. At present 2,000 Roman Catholics are active in this region. Missionaries run 450 schools and 300 hospitals in Chotanagpur areas⁵.

¹ Narain Chandra Lahiri, Swadeenta Yuddha Men Janata Ka Viplav (in Hindi), Calcutta, Saraswati Library, 1940, p.1.

² *Ibid.*

³ Sachchidanand "Pattern of Politico-Economic change in Middle India" in F. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao (eds.), Dominance and state power in Modern India. vol. 2, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 289

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 290

⁵ India Today 3 Nov. 1997, P. 46

Role of Church

Church has played an important role in the life and politics of the Jharkhand region. It became the most important factor of cultural change in Chotanagpur-Santhal Paragana. It fought for the tribal cause and lent its powerful support to the demands of the tribal peasants for the restoration of land, the regulation of rent and abolition of feudal dues. They were regarded as guardians and messiah of the poor tribals. The Christian missionary generated among the tribals a consciousness of their past and present exploitation and their rights and privileges. This could be gauged from the fact that, all the leaders of this region from the beginning of the twentieth century till two decades after independence, were all Christians.

It was the misery and exploitation of aboriginal by the local *Jamindars* (landlords), moneylenders and *marwaris* (businessmen), which prepared a suitable ground for the missionaries to spread the message of the Gospel. In the eyes of missionaries, the fundamental solution to adivasi's worldly problem lay in the Christian faith. The missionaries concentrated their efforts on the major tribes, particularly on the more affluent and prestigious sections among them. Their efforts were most successful among the **Kharia, Oraon** and **Munda** tribes of Jharkhand region. In the words of Sir M.G. Hallet, there is no

doubt the great success of Christian mission in obtaining converts is due largely to the secular benefits which the Mundas thus obtain⁶. The largest number of conversions took place in those areas where landlords subjected tribals to the worst kind of exploitation. It ultimately paved their way to mass conversion in the Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region of Bihar and the Bastar region of Madhya Pradesh, the two largest pockets of tribals in middle-India.

The rapid spread of Christianity alarmed the Jamindars who feared that it would check in free exercise of the despotic power, which they had so long enjoyed. They began to look for an opportunity to drive away the missionaries from Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana. Christianity not only brought tensions between the Jamindars and the Christians but it also divided the tribals among themselves.

The increasing activities of the missionaries, reports of forcible conversions and increased pressure from the RSS led the Madhya Pradesh government to appoint a commission under the chairmanship of B.S. Niyogi in 1952 to report on the missionary activities. The commission observed :

⁶ M.G. Hallet quoted in R.B.S.C. Roy, Introduction to Munda and their people 1917, Ranchi. Ambika Prakashan, p. 17.

Evangelisation in India appears to be part of the Uniform world policy to revive Christendom for re-establishing Western supremacy and is not prompted by spiritual motives⁷.

Regarding the aims and objectives of the Christian missionaries the report further states that

the objective is apparently to create Christian minority pockets with a view to disrupt the solidarity of the non-Christian societies and the mass conversion of a considerable section of Adivasi (tribal) with this ulterior motive is fraught with danger to the security of the states⁸.

This report had the wide ramifications for the future of Christianity and the missionaries in India. Hence, they mounted enormous pressure on the government to stop the report from being made public. It could see the light only after the twenty years from the date of submission. The fact behind this delay was that Christians were the major supporters of the congress party, ruling both at the centre and in the states and Congress could not take the risk of antagonising them.

In the meantime, RSS, which was banned in 1948 due to its alleged involvement in Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, got an opportunity to recover its lost face and gain legitimacy in the eyes of Hindus. It engaged itself actively in this region and opposed the

⁷ As mentioned in Christophe Jaffrelot, Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, London, Hurst and Company, 1996, p. 196.

⁸ *Ibid*

church's activities, demanded their expulsion from the Indian soil and sometimes physically disrupted the functioning of missionary schools.

RSS derived its sustenance in this region mainly from businessmen and service holders and traders who made their way in through various government projects which was established immediately after the independence. The growth of the industries and government sponsored projects coupled with the development of means of conveyance resulted in massive influx of outsiders, mainly from North Bihar, who first gained control over the economy and then the politics of the region.

But, these activities failed to have the desired effect and the RSS decided to intervene in this region in an organised manner. In 1952, the RSS launched an organisation called Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (Tribals Welfare Organisation)⁹ and deputed swayamsevaks (workers) to oversee its functioning and co-ordinate its activities.

For this purpose, it got liberal assistance from the local *marwaris* and moneylenders. Maharaja (ruler) of Jashpur (M.P.) was appointed the president of VKA. These local businessmen and moneylenders were peeved at the way they were being targeted by the

⁹ A frontal organisation of the RSS active in tribals area.

Christian tribals and missionaries. They were, otherwise, averse to the idea of tribal welfare and were, in fact, directly responsible for the plight and misery of the tribals of this region.

Its affiliate, the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram undertakes activities like opening of the one teacher school, namely *shishu vidya mandirs*, exclusively for the tribals, where education was free. They were taught in vernacular languages. Health centres were opened for tribals and it encouraged sport activities to train tribal children in martial arts (with a motive to fight the armøury of Christians). Through its shakhas (branch), the RSS tried to infuse the national spirit which would foster national unity¹⁰ as it perceived missionary and their activities as a threat to national security. Aping Christian missionaries and their Bible, the RSS pracharaks went about preaching in the tribal areas with the ***Hanuman Chalisa*** and ***Ramcharit Manas***. They organised Ramayan Mandalis and 'liberated' several tribal places of worship from Christian missionaries, to win back the tribals population to the Hindu fold. One of the main aims of the organisation is to assimilate tribal youth into the Hindu mainstream. Under the programme called the Student's Experience in Inter State Living, tribal students from remote areas are taken to cities and accommodated in the families of RSS sympathisers to make them familiar with the Hindu parivar. Through

¹⁰ Tribal : Treasure Trove of India, BVKA Publication, 1993.

tribals from the mainstream resulting in further alienation. The RSS considered it as its civilizational duty to integrate the tribals into Hindu culture, which was increasingly being identified with the Indian culture. Hindutva, according to the RSS, is the essence of this culture. RSS maintains that many of the religious beliefs, practices and rituals of the tribal population are borrowed from Hinduism. They are a part of Hindu society and therefore should be protected from the conversion to Christianity. But, the RSS maintains a mute silence over the status of the tribals in Hindu society.

RSS is active in this region for two reasons. Firstly, to build-up a mass political base for its political offshoots-earlier the Jan Sangh and now the BJP. Second, to preach the ideology of 'Hindutva' by raising the bogey of conversion to Christianity as a 'national and social threat'. It is evident from its functioning in the other parts of India and inside Bihar that by raking up the Muslim infiltration issue the RSS seeks to mobilize the Hindus.

Hindutva and Cultural Contestationn

Hindutva means who believes in the Hinduism and one who is a Hindu. According to Savarkar Hindu is one attracted to his fatherland, that is, Bharatvarsha; one who inhabits the blood of the great Aryan

race¹³. This definition was broad enough to include all the creeds and sects of Indian origin. It is the myopic vision of Hindutva which does not see any difference between **shaiva** and **vaishnava** in Tamil Nadu. It was essentially to subvert the diversity and plurality of Indian traditions. It ignores the cultural amalgam that has taken place between Hindu and Muslims over the last thousands of years.

In the RSS vision of Hindu **Rashtra** (nation), four categories of people are excluded and are identified as the enemies of India. They are the Indian followers of foreign religions (such as Islam and Christianity); communists and their sympathisers; westernised members of Indian intelligentsia and foreign powers¹⁴. It is significant to note, here, that Sikhs and Buddhists have been deliberately omitted from the list and are viewed as Hindus which is at odds with their own sense of commitment to their distinctive religion. The adivasis are viewed by the RSS as 'left out' in the onward march of Hindu civilization. The difference between 'Hindutva' and 'Hinduism' has been brought out sharply by parts S. Ghosh 'unlike the concept of Hinduism which is concerned with the ideological and spiritual aspect of the religion, Hindutva encompasses the entire spectrum of culture,

¹³ V.D. Savarkar, Hindutva : who is a Hindu, Bombay, S.S. Savarkar Publication, 1969.

¹⁴ Stanley J. Tambiah, Levelling Crowds : Ethnonationalist conflict and collective violence in South Asia, London, University of California Press, 1993, p. 246.

social, political and linguistic aspect of which political aspect is most dominant¹⁵.

The RSS sees no difference between 'Hinduism' and 'Hindutva'. The problem arises when the difference between 'religion as faith' and 'religion as an ideology' gets blurred. Such confusion was given credence when Mahatma Gandhi decried the attempt of some secular leaders to segregate religion from the politics. The leaders as a 'symbol' to arouse the people's conscience and mobilise them for the political struggle profusely used religion during nationalist movement. It has both an emancipatory as well as a destructive role. It depends upon one's choice of use of it.

As an ideological construct, Hindutva articulates the 'interests' of certain sections of the population in relation to others, whose interest it seeks to incorporate in an effort to achieve unity within classes and communities of a Hindu social order. Their unity is sought in opposition to the ideological 'other' (in this case Christianity) who are seen as an opponents in a combative tension that is gradually pervading the social fabric of India¹⁶. Hindutva is a strategy of political

¹⁵ Partha S. Ghosh, Hindu Nationalism and the politics of Nation Building, Delhi, 1996, Oxford University Press, p. 53.

¹⁶ Sumantra Bose, "Hindu Nationalism and the Crisis of the India State : A Theoretical Perspective", in S. Bose and A. Jalal (eds.) Nationalism, Democracy and Development : State Politics in India, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997.

mobilisation and it is a concrete demonstration of as to how the masses can be kept under traditional caste dominance even in modern times by a careful exclusion of economic and other interests and by emphasising culture, tradition and religion.

Ideology is not always a rigid framework. Ideology seeks to provide a framework through which individual comprehends the processes of socio-economic change and formulate their interest. But, ideologies are not always a consistent and coherent bodies of doctrine and it is open to different and various interpretations. It is this flexibility which allows Hindutva to play its role in different situation.

It is not our intention here to dwell at length on Hindutva but it is essential to understand the process through which it has gained salience over the last ten years in Indian politics. It will throw light on the activities of the RSS and its allied organisations in the Jharkhand region of Bihar and as to how the Hindutva ideology has been interpreted and moulded by its protagonists to attract the tribals.

Jharkhand region is unique in the sense it is the site of all the three important races Australoid, Mongolian and caucasians. The intermixing of races has gone on for so long and so deep that it is difficult to identify any perceptible difference among them.

Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region is the major part of Jharkhand region of Bihar and it is the heartland of proposed Jharkhand state. The configuration of different communities is as follows : Hindu population is 56 percent, tribals constitute 27 percent, and Christians 9 percent of the tribal population¹⁷. Hindus came here in search of job from the different parts of Bihar and finally settled here. There was least resistance from the tribals, who have already been subordinated by modern development and their conditions worsened in the due process of development which led to their displacement from their traditional homeland. The conversion to Christianity created a distinct upper class among the tribals, with the converts, having gained access to education through missionary run institutions, cornering most of the jobs. It created on the one hand schism in the tribal society and on the other hand it worked as a factor of cohesion in creating inter-tribal solidarity on the basis of Christian denominational affinities. It was difficult for the RSS to get the support of the tribals with its homogenised Hindutva. It suspected the tribal's demand of separate state as a separatist demand backed by church. The RSS was against laying greater emphasis on local culture as it divides the nation and encourages anti-national activities.

The little support for the Jan Sangh in this region, where the

¹⁷ Shyam Lal, Op cit, p. 12.

RSS has been active since 1950s and 60s led to a rethink in its strategy. Hindutva, rigidly defined, was a hindrance in its forward march. The RSS, hence, sought to employ the variants of Hindutva, which were specifically targeted against the Christians tribals with a motive to gain the sympathy of non-Christian tribals. The RSS sought to ventilate the anger of tribals, in a violent way. It is because of the fact that by 1960s and 70s democratic process through the politics of reservations and the specific schemes meant for tribals, benefited few non-Christian tribals and rest could not take the advantage due to their poor economic condition and educational inferiority. It is these left out tribals who have been taken in to confidence by the RSS to attack the Christian tribals as well the state's policy.

The ideology of Hindutva reached a flashpoint by 1970. It was difficult for them to preach it in quintessentially pure form. In the first phase, that is between 1950-1978 it could not penetrate further deep into the tribal's heartland despite all its rhetoric. So there is a change in the tactics of Hindutva.

In 1978, a 'freedom of religion' bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha. The bill sought to prohibit conversion from one religion to another by the use of force or inducement or by fraudulent means. This proposal, which was backed by the RSS and supported by Morarji

Desai, was intended to offer tribals the protection of the state against the proselytization activities of missionaries. Morarji Desai later withdrew with his support for the measure because of the agitation by Christians and the minority's commission¹⁸.

There was an apparent shift in the RSS strategy during late 1970s and 80s. They focussed their energy on that strategy which could have some beneficial impact on BJP's political prospects. After 1978 they adopted fresh tactics to attract tribals. The process of persuasion was replaced by strategies of co-option and assimilation¹⁹. The reconversion of tribals was carried out on a large scale and by 1991. 1,557 Christian tribals had been reconverted to the Hindu fold. The VHP declared the year 1996 as *Hindu Banao Varsha* (convert to Hindu year) and sought to reconvert one lakh Christian tribals. Hindu tribals, are now being told that it is not good to eat beef and are also to report to the police if they find Christians slaughtering cows²⁰. These activities furthers antagonized the Christian missionary. For assimilation to take place even in part there must not only be a loss of the culture of origin but also a gain of the host culture²¹. Assimilation usually

¹⁸ Organizer, 15 April 1979.

¹⁹ Assimilation means absorption into dominant culture. See N.K. Bose, The Structure of Hindu Society, Delhi, Orient Longman, 1975.

²⁰ India Today, 31 December 1995.

²¹ Anthony D. Smith, Theories of Nationalism, London, Duckworth, 1983.

takes place with the absorption of immigrant groups, into the host culture but in the case of Jharkhand it is the other way round . It is the Hindu culture, by dint of its numerical majority in this region which has become the dominant culture and the host culture and tribal's culture has been submerged into the dominant culture²².

This process has been going on since the last hundred years, but the rapacity could be seen only after 1978. It resulted into pauperization, displacement and migration of indigenous ethnic groups. The reduction of the oppressed (tribals) to this state is a sine qua non for exploitation to continue. They have been immersed into a 'culture of silence', a culture that debilitates and destroys not only their personality, but through it their humanity²³.

This process of assimilation has also been called the '**Hindu method of tribal absorption**'²⁴ which assuming cultural autonomy to the newly integrated and lowly ranked tribes ultimately release a cultural process by which the dominated and lowly ranked tribals gradually emulate the cultural pattern of the dominant Hindu upper castes. This process is bit enduring and coercion-free.

Christianity allows the tribals autonomy in the cultural aspect

²² Sajal Basu, Op cit, p. 32.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ N.K. Bose, Op cit.

and this can be observed in the Christian tribal's participation in their respective festivals . It is naive to say that Christianity does not nurture political ambition, but, it is limited to the protection of church and missionary. So far as Hindutva is concerned, it is not only imposing but also archaic. It is misfit for a peace and freedom loving tribals, but they have been incapacitated to protest, and lack leaders who might take up this issue as their brethren like *Mundas*, *Tana Bhagat* etc. did in the nineteenth century.

The RSS has been able to establish a link with the adivasis by giving some kind of economic incentives, but full absorption of them as a members of Hindu society is yet to happen. The hegemonic and homogenising tendency of Hindutva belittles tribals importance. Moreover, the material incentive provided by the Hindutva is no match to Christians. Christianity, on the other hand, has been able to establish its image as the 'religion of oppressed'²⁵. Although the basic theme of Hindutva, that of cultural unity and renewal, was articulated in the region, its specifics were crafted to give it a greater appeal. It was then implanted, locally²⁶.

As a general rule, tribals are not excluded from the RSS

²⁵ G. Aloysius, Religion an Emancipation Identity, Delhi, New Age International Publisher, 1997.

²⁶ Russel Hocking, "The Potential for BJP Expansion Ideology, Politics and Regional Appeal – The Lesson of Jharkhand", South Asia, vol. XVII, Special issue, 1994, p. 165.

conception of the Hindu nation. This seeming the paradox given the general understanding of the sociology of India, according to Russel Hocking, is hidden under the slippage within Hindutva between 'Hindu' and 'Indian'; between Hindu as religious category and Hindu as territorial concept²⁷.

In the Jharkhand region, the RSS's message of unity and exclusion of foreign elements is specifically targeted against Christian tribals. They are characterised as 'aliens' and westerners. This region has seen a long battle of tribals against the foreigners over land, tenancy, autonomy issues etc. The prosperity of the Christian tribals vis-a-vis non-Christian tribals make this a potentially fruitful strategy, combined as it is with the call for the appropriation of church's property in the region²⁸. Besides it the Hindu nationalists are trying to enhance their support base among tribals by co-opting potent tribal symbols like the memory of Birsa Munda, bow and arrows etc. for their purposes.

An initial effort of the RSS to make inroads into tribal heartland was frustrated by their limited social base. Also, the RSS's selective recruitment of the cadre, mostly outsiders like Madhya Pradesh and

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Anish Gupta, "Making Sense of Jharkhand", Sunday, Calcutta, 18-24 October, 1992, pp. 32-37.

Maharashtrian Brahmins, who had little knowledge about this region and their distinct cultural outlook placed limits on its mobilisation capacity.

RSS has the ability to draw upon large number of legacies which have been an enduring features of diverse reform and protest movements and use it as a symbol²⁹ for mobilisation. In its changed stance, the RSS appointed many of the tribal workers as heads of the local units and at one time as many as 56 tribals³⁰, were leading the local units. The RSS is adept in using symbols, popular demands and converts it into a strategy of mobilisation.

Due emphasis has been given to the para-military training to the tribals in the RSS sakhas. Since, 1978, the RSS has opened its unit in far interior villages. *Lathi* (Bamboo stick) and sword exercises, and the use of bow and arrows during the training tend to attract the tribals.

As a part of change in the strategy, the VHP began to intensify its activities. The militant and para-military character of this organisation is not hidden from anyone VHP got massive funds from

²⁹ A symbol refers to any objects, acts, events or relation which serve as a vehicle for conception. See Clifford Geertz, Interpretation of Culture, New York, Basic Book Inc., 1973.

³⁰ Jharkhand Jyoti (in Hindi), no. 17, Ranchi, November 1991, p. 25.

abroad for its activities in the tribal areas³¹. As usually, it organised *Janjagaran* (awareness) programme through *Rathyathra* (chariot procession) and visited the tribal villages. The chariot was laden with the pictures of Birsa Munda and some Hindu deities. This was all part of a calculated strategy to whip up frenzy and instigate its followers to become more militant.

Birsha Munda, popularly called Birsha Bhagwan is a symbol of tribal's identity and his importance lies in the fact that he fought against the British Government and targeted Christian missionary. Hence, he becomes a symbol of tribal pride which has been profusely used by RSS/VHP/BJP. It is similar when they invoke the memory of Shivaji to acetate Maratha Pride or Maharana Pratap's to arouse Rajputana pride. Ram Katha (oral) is extensively propagated by the RSS in order to acquaint them with glorious part of India.

A report, published by government of India notes that 'Bihar' has witnessed most heinous riots between 1986-90 and approximately 2,000 people were massacred³². Most of the riots occurred in the city like Jamshedpur, Ranchi, Bokaro, Bhagalpur etc. There are also other reports which confirm the role of RSS and

³¹ India Today, 11 December 1995.

³² N.S. Saxena, Communal Riot in India, Noida, Trishul Publisher, 1990, p. 131.

VHP in the riots. In the 1981 riots, one of the BJP MLAs was suspended from the party precisely on the basis of charges levelled by one of the Riot enquiry commission³³.

Thus, RSS has been active in this region since 1950s and 60s, apparently on the basis of religious cleavages. RSS acts through its frontal organisations namely VHP and VKA. VKA is active in the field of health, education and sports by giving some economic incentives on the pattern of Christian missionary. Though, the success in terms of vote, which was reflected by BJS, is not so impressive yet it helped RSS a lot to establish among the tribals. The long term strategy of the RSS to build base among these vulnerable sections has paid off as BJP's performance, no doubt was the result of its adoption of Vananchal issue in its political agenda, is certainly an outcome of the RSS activities.

So far, we have discussed about RSS's decades long presence in this region. Here certain references have to be made regarding RSS and its various offshoots. After Gandhi's assassination, RSS was banned and many of its leaders were arrested. So the need to have

³³ Jatinder Narain Committee, appointed by the Government of Bihar, reported about the RSS's involvement and instigating Jamshedpur riot (1981). The method used are (1) rousing communal feelings in a majority community by the propaganda that Christians are not loyal citizens of the country; and (2) deepening the fear in the majority community by a clear propaganda that the population is increasing and that Hindu declines.

a political party to articulate its interest became inevitable; thus, emerged the Bhartiya Jan Sangh (BJS). RSS used to send its trained cadres for some organisational task and assignment to BJS. Therefore, analyzing BJS without RSS and RSS without BJS is not only simply invalid proposition, also a historical fallacy. After the political turmoil during the emergency and the Janata experiments and its failure forced RSS to assert itself in the similar way. This time it is not BJS, it is Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) which began to speak on behalf of RSS. BJP started sharing the responsibility of RSS. Therefore, in the Chotanagpur region as well BJP's emergence became unavoidable. At the same time, its activism and its growth required special attention. BJP made some significant changes in its mobilization techniques, which were not endorsed by the RSS. These mobilization techniques in the post 1980s would be discussed subsequently.

Chapter Three

BJP IN CHOTANAGPUR-SANTHAL PARGANA REGION

The Bhartiya Janata Party, as far as Bihar is concerned has not grown up uniformly. If we divide Bihar in terms of its geo-cultural context for our research sake, we end up having three major regions. The northern part of Bihar consisting 26 parliamentary constituencies remain strong hold of RJD, as the majority Muslims and Yadavs become the backbone of ruling Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in this region. The central Bihar containing 14 parliamentary constituencies gives us a different picture. The significant presence of Naxalite groups pose the dichotomy, to great extent, in terms of land owners and landless labourers. Admittedly, the land owners by virtue of there anti-Naxalism tend to rally around BJP. Thus, BJP is seen along with its ally Samata party a promising political platform vis-à-vis the Naxals. At last the southern part of Bihar remains the stronghold of BJP.

This South part constitutes are what we call Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region of Bihar. This region with its 14 parliamentary constituencies has an amalgamation of different cultural groups – tribals, the migrant upper caste Hindu population and backward castes.

Precisely due to this diversity and virtual absence of cultural

homogeneity, invariably all political parties find it very difficult to woo the support of the masses. In such a situation, having one idiom for mobilisation in this entire region becomes absolutely futile. Therefore, the contestation of various political parties on ideological grounds and mobilisation techniques became inevitable. When every party is trying its best to get the popular support. BJP alone was able to secure popular support as demonstrated in 1996 and 1998 parliamentary elections. This success rate requires some analysis as to what made the people to endorse, BJP's plea as their representative. In other words, it is the unique mobilisation technique fetched BJP a significant popular support. These questions require further and deep elaborations.

When we analyse the genesis and growth of BJP till 1988, BJP was very similar to other parties in this region. To put it other way, BJP's presence was not significant enough to project it as an indisputable representative of this region. In 1988, BJP began to articulate for separate state called ***Vananchal***. Ever since it made this demand, BJP popularity has been on ascending order. So, it is necessary to examine the link between a separate state and party's growth in this region.

Jharkhand Vs Vananchal

The Jharkhand movement, for the creation of a separate Jharkhand state, is over 50 years old, and aims at preserving the tribal way of life and safeguarding the distinct social and cultural values of the people living in the Jharkhand region. The tribals of the Jharkhand area claim that they are the original settlers of this area and thus consider themselves the rightful owners of the whole landscape. It is their contention that they have been deliberately deprived of all the sources of their livelihood. One of the primary goals of the Jharkhand movement, which has its roots in British colonialism, was to drive out the dikus (outsiders).

Initially, it was the Jharkhand party, which demanded a separate state comprising of mineral belts of South Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. The movement picked up popularity, as it vociferously demanded a separate state. The party got initial success in 1952 when it emerged as the second largest party in Bihar assembly and same performance was again repeated in the next assembly election. The leaders of the movement got immense financial help from the Christian community¹. Subsequently, the Jharkhand party lost its

¹ Christians supported the Jharkhand party in order to get assurance from them to protect their property and life.

momentum due to some inner contradictions². Jharkhand party's merger with the Congress proved to be a fatal mistake on the part of Jaipal Singh, leader of the then Jharkhand party. Jaipal Singh was wooed by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his party merged with the Congress and he was made a cabinet minister³.

The movement was started once again by Sibhu Soren under the banner of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) in 1973. In the 1980 assembly polls, the party won all the seats from this area. The JMM was more radical, assertive in its demand and was composed of three distinct groups -- Marxist-Leninist groups represented by A.K. Roy, a colliery leader, non-tribal leader Binod Bihari Mahto and Sibhu Soren, a tribal leader. It organised massive economic blockades to press the demand for a separate state. Notwithstanding his popularity, Soren lost in the 1984 polls, which was fought in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination. Congress wrested all the Lok Sabha seats from this area. Though JMM was side-tracked, the movement did not die down.

It is an established reality that almost all non Jharkhand political parties, including the Jan Sangh and its successor BJP, the Congress, the socialist in the shape of Janata Dal, the Rashtriya

² The party was virtually divided on the issue of whether non-tribals should be inducted into the movement or not.

³ Jharkhand party saved Binodanand Jha's ministry on the floor of Vidhan Sabha in 1963.

Janata Dal and a section of the communists have overtly or covertly – depending on the political situation – stalled the creation of separate state. The reason is simple Bihar boast of being “a forest and mineral rich state” by virtue of its geographical boundary incorporating the mineral and forest rich 18 districts of the Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana. And people of the central and north Bihar have dominated state politics. Needless to say, the north and central Bihar political clan which has produced all the Chief Ministers would not like to part with a region which is backbone of the state’s economy. Of more than Rs. 1700 crore tax collected by the state (in 1997), about Rs. 1200 crore along comes from this region. In fact, Rs. 2000 crore of Rs. 3000 crore generated by the state as its internal resources came from the Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region⁴. Now the importance of this small region becomes crystal clear.

Initially, the tribals outnumbered the non-tribal in most part of the region. However, according to the latest census (1991) this region is populated by more than 67 percent of non-tribals and outsiders. Outsiders (locally known as dikus) have swamped this tribal tract, taking over its economy and commerce. Much of the migrant population (upper caste Hindus) has come from north Bihar and in the past two decades alone, the adivasi population has been reduced from

⁴ Arvind N. Das, “Bihar Sans its better half”, Pioneer, New Delhi, 12 April 1998.

36 percent to 26 percent⁵.

In 1988, BJP allowed its state unit to incorporate the demand for a separate state called *Vananchal* in its political agenda⁶. It was not out of voluntary affirmation to this demands; but due to excessive pressure from the rank and file in the lower echelons of the party and it became almost impossible for the central leadership to ignore this demand. The resurgence of the Jharkhand movement in 1980s would have been an important factor in the calculation underlying BJP's support for Vananchal.

Etymologically the name Jharkhand has a tribal root⁷ (Jharkhand means shrub and khand is land). On the other hand, Vananchal essentially has an Aryan connotation descending directly from Sanskrit (in Sanskrit Van is forest and anchal stands for province). The proposed Vananchal region consists of 18 districts of Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana, the original Jharkhand region of Bihar. In spite of prolonged presence of RSS's activities in this region,

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Party in its manifesto (1990) discussed separately the issue of Vananchal, which says that the party's support for Vananchal or Uttranchal is a part of the BJP's declared policy of greater economic and political decentralisation.

⁷ The region was called 'Jharkhand' by Akbar's Chronicler. The name Jharkhand has been given also by none else than the great Hindu saint Chaitanya Dev while he was on his way to Vrindavan. It is complete disregard of history, the BJP seeks to give the area a new name and thus, a new identity (for comprehensive understanding see A.N. Das, Op. Cit).

BJP, did not have immediate benefits in terms of popular support. Though, RSS presence provided a conducive ambience for BJP to establish its organisation. However, it is to be noted, this it would not have been very easy for BJP to establish its organisation apparatus without RSS.

Another important fact should be noted here is that the movement itself has metamorphosed by this time⁸. Now it is no more against the outsider. It has become regional in character, involving non-tribals also. The movement has travelled a long distance on the ideological road from ethnic via development to regional. Thus, the demand for Vananchal is an outcome of underlying electoral, religious and ideological calculation⁹.

BJP claims that Vananchal is a practical as well as viable solution to the adivasi's worldly problems. Even the leaders of Soren and Simon Marandi's stature concede (covertly) to the impracticality of conducting a movement of such a vast magnitude – both politically and area wise. As Soren opines, "there are political barriers. Even if we share a lot of things in common, a movement for a greater Jharkhand

⁸ K.S. Singh, "From Ethnicity to Regionalism : A study in Tribal Politics and Movements in Chotanagpur from 1900 to 1975", in S.C. Malik (ed.) Protest and Dissent and Indian Civilization, Shimla, IAS Publication, 1987.

⁹ Indu Bharti, "Behind BJP's Vananchal Demands", Economic and Political Weekly, vol. XXIV, no. 13, 1 April 1989, p. 656.

doesn't appear to be feasible under present circumstances"¹⁰. Thus, giving the legitimacy to BJP's demand for a state consisting just 18 districts of Bihar. The demand seems to be more tactical than anything to do with the formation of a separate state.

Interestingly, the BJP has all along rejected the term 'adivasi' and the existence of adivasi as an equal and integral part of so called "Aryan Society". The reason behind the choice and use of the term Vanavasi is significant for two reasons. First, it allows the BJP to avoid using the common term adivasi with the connotation of first or original inhabitants, pre-dating the 'Aryan migration'. Second, the use of the term 'Vananchal' with 'Vanavasi' links the people and the region¹¹. It is obvious that they can not antagonise the local Hindus who according to BJP are the pure Aryan supposedly the first and original inhabitants of this land at the same time it will bring the adivasis into the Hindu fold by calling them Vanvasi, as forest and land is the lifeline of tribals.

The use of symbols in mobilisation is not a new thing and as we know that khadi had become a symbol of swaraj during the nationalist movement. By virtue of its very existence, symbols do not possess any

¹⁰ Hindustan Times, Patna, 18 April 1988.

¹¹ Russell Hocking, "The Potential for BJP expansion", South Asia, vol. XVII, Special issue, 1994, p. 164.

power, however, the interaction of economic condition with cultural idiom nurtures certain symbol as signs of power. But symbol, on its own, has no meaning in politics. Its capacity to attract masses depends upon the relationship of that particular symbol with the socio economic existence of the people. It does not mean that people or culture are free to create any symbolic systems imaginable, or that all such constructs are equally tenable in material world¹².

Creation of Vananchal as a symbol of state and its existential condition is linked with the fact that in post-independence India identity was created through politics¹³. The cultural forms, values and practices of ethnic groups become, Paul Brass observes, 'political resources for elites in competition for power and economic advantage'¹⁴. The demand for Vananchal is politically significant for BJP for some reasons.

Behind the gimmick of Vananchal, the factor which works is that the combined population of four state will again give the tribal a dominant position and the very existence of this party will be at stake. That is why, BJP is insisting on just 18 districts, of Bihar where Hindu

¹² David C. Kertzer, Ritual, Politics and Power, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1948, p. 4.

¹³ Rajni Kothari, "Culture, Ethnicity and the State", Times of India, (sesquicentennial issue : society), November-December 1988, pp. 6-10.

¹⁴ Paul R. Brass, The Politics of India Since Independence, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 15.

migrants are in majority and dominate all the activity - from political to economic. The another motive behind the Vananchal is to counter the growing activities of leftist in the Jharkhand movement. During whole of 1980s, several groups of communist parties including naxals joined the movement and asked for complete reversal of old tenant's policy, which was tilted in favour of local Jamindars.

It is also a game of upmanship as whichever group takes the lead in forming the state is in all likelihood to gain immense political mileage. It will add another feature in its cap by having a separate BJP ruled state and BJP is sure to come a ruling party because of its elaborate organisational apparatus and ground work of RSS among the non-Christian tribals.

On the issue of separate state, Congress fell flat. Since beginning Congress opposed the formation of separate tribal state. The consequence of this opposition favoured other parties. Notwithstanding these facts, Congress has significant following among the migrant population and Christian tribals. The plight of Congress could be gauged from this statement, "unless we reflect the hopes and aspiration of the people we can not win votes" opined by a senior most leader¹⁵.

¹⁵ Gyan Ranjan, quoted in A.K. Roy, "Saffron vs Rest", Hindustan Times,

Several other factors such as the disgraced position of other Jharkhand parties; the involvement of the Jharkhand party leaders in a bribery case and their dithering stand on the issue of state hood. There was a complete vacuum in the leadership for the Jharkhand movement in early 1990. The reported involvement of the big leaders like Sibhu Soren and Suraj Mandal in JMM-payoff case has made these leaders discredited in the eyes of public. They betrayed the aspiration of tribals by lending support to the Congress (I) government on the floor of Lok Sabha in 1991. The BJP, which at least gives the appearance of being led by an austere and puritanical leadership and followed by a disciplined leader is on an advantageous position vis-à-vis Congress and Jharkhand parties in this region¹⁶.

The whole course of Jharkhand movement has not only betrayed the aspirations of the tribals but it has gone backwards from the position where it was. BJP was gaining popularity in the Jharkhand region also because the Jharkhand parties had failed to improve the quality of life or the infrastructure of this area, despite the fact that this party had supported more than once to ruling RJD on the floor of Vidhan Sabha.

Patna, 2 February 1998.

¹⁶ Though it is a flawed proposition but compared to others BJP leaders are supposedly honest, hardworking due to RSS decades long presence in this region.

The success of BJP, particularly after the adoption of Vananchal in its political agenda, is reflected in its performance in the successive elections after 1988. It is despite the fact that BJP has never organised any economic blockade or bandh. In 1989, BJP won 9 seats out of which 5 seats were from this region alone. It won 3 reserved seats (ST-2, SC-1) out of 4 seats meant for this region¹⁷. In 1991, though it won just 5 seats from whole Bihar but again these 5 seats were from this region. Its vote share was as high as 30.8 percent as compared to its state average¹⁸. Even in the 1995 election, out of 41 assembly seats won by the BJP, 21 were in this region. It won 18.4 percent of the popular votes, against its state average of 13.1 percent. Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) won 6 of the 14 Lok Sabha seats from here in 1991 and won 19.3 percent of popular votes, half of BJP's total percentage of votes (see the table 3.1). In 1996, Lok Sabha election BJP's support has increased tremendously among the tribals. BJP has virtually wiped out all the other contenders on the issue of separate states. In 1998 election this performance was repeated again as it won 11 out of 14 Lok Sabha seats in this region. This time even Sibumoren lost to the BJP's candidate.

¹⁷ Indu Bharti, "Lok Sabha Elections : Message from Bihar", Economic and Political Weekly, vol. XXVI, no. 33, 17 August 1991, p. 1896.

¹⁸ Frontline, 17 May 1996, pp. 39-40.

Table 3.1

Geographical distribution of electoral support for BJP in Bihar, 1985-1996

| | 1985 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1995 | 1996 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| N. Bihar | NA* | NA | NA | 12.4 | 12.5 | 11.8 |
| S. Bihar | 15.5 | 15.3 | 26.1 | 30.8 | 18.4 | 33.52 |
| C. Bihar | NA | NA | NA | 8.5 | 12.1 | 20.2 |
| All Bihar | NA | 7.5 | 11.7 | 15.9 | 13.1 | 12.6 |

Source : CSDS Data Unit, Delhi

* : Not Available

Despite assertions to the contrary it would seem that we would be justified in arguing that the BJP, with its Vananchal slogan, has developed a significant level of support in the tribal region (see table 3.2)¹⁹.

Table 3.2

BJP's Percentage of votes among different sections of Bihar, 1991-1996

| | SC | | | ST | | | General | | |
|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|------|------|
| | 1991 | 1995 | 1996 | 1991 | 1995 | 1996 | 1991 | 1995 | 1996 |
| INC | 26.3 | 50 | 7.9 | 24.3 | 8.1 | 22.9 | 24.0 | 51.7 | 10.6 |
| BJP | 18.1 | 9.1 | 25.6 | 29.9 | 21.6 | 25.9 | 15.1 | 27.6 | 15.6 |
| JD | 34.9 | 27.3 | 33.9 | 3.9 | 10.8 | 12.0 | 34.9 | 6.9 | 25.5 |
| JMM | 0.6 | 13.6 | 0.1 | 29.7 | 52.8 | 17.9 | 3.3 | 10.3 | 1.5 |

Source : Frontline, 2 June 1995; 17 May 1996.

¹⁹ Indu Bharti, Op. Cit, 1 April 1989 (Bharti asserts that it is entirely baseless to say that the BJP owes its success to south Bihar to the slogan of Vananchal which has proved to be a hit with the tribals; rather he argues that BJP's success was attributed to the poor organization of JMM.

This table reveals that the BJP has the maximum support among schedule tribes in the 1996 election. It won all the three reserved constituencies – Khunti, Palamu and Lohardaga – located in this region clearly showing the increasing popularity of BJP among the tribal. It also shows the decline of support for Jharkhand parties of all hues (JMM, JMM (s) etc.) and Congress. Among the non-tribals Congress has still some followings and BJP support base is limited to the upper elite (Brahmin, Bhumihar) of this section. In fact, this is a kind of alignment, that is, between the upper castes and lower depressed sections (tribals in Chotanagpur and SCs in northern and central part of Bihar), what BJP wants to synthesise²⁰ to make it a potential weapon to beat the others and transcend the barriers of upper caste – Christian tribals of Congress and Jharkhand parties in south Bihar and Muslims, Yadavs in north Bihar. It has been helped by the fact that tribal no longer display the tradition of differential attitude toward the Hindus²¹.

There are some local and temporary factors that have immediate effect on BJP's fortune in this region. The failure of Jharkhand Area

²⁰ BJP with its Hindutva got stucked in the Hindi region. Even in Hindi region its influence was limited to some sections. In order to widen its support base BJP looked for which could take it to the strata hitherto untouched. Thus, it became inevitable for BJP to look for a potential ally. In UP BJP supported BSP and in Bihar they are trying disparately to make inroads into this section.

²¹ Moonis Raza and Aijajuddin Ahmad, An Atlas of Tribal India, New Delhi, Publication Division, 1992.

Autonomous Council (JAAC, which is an outcome of a compromise between the centre, state and the Jharkhand parties in 1994. It has a limited financial and political autonomy), which was thoroughly opposed by the BJP on the floor of assembly. It sent a positive signals among the tribals and shows the BJP's concern on the issue of statehood. BJP demanded not less than a separate state. JMM capitulated to Laloo Prasad Yadav's machination was seen as a betrayal to their demands. The JAAC also failed to fulfil the expectations of the native people and its failure was the consequence of, as it proclaims, was the consequence of less amount of money received from Bihar government²². And it's no wonder when L.K. Advani starts its speech in this region by calling the name of separate state and the pathetic condition of industries²³. The lack of development has proved always a hit among the voter of Bihar as the condition has deteriorated fastly over the year.

BJP, which drew its support from the marwaris, are now getting the support from industrialist²⁴, tribals, and of course, some sections of Hindu migrants. It gets money from the local businessmen, industrialist to carry out its political agenda. The development agenda

²² Sivadas Banerjee, "Jharkhand Council Slides into Coma : BJP steps in Fray", New Age, 28 January 1996, p. 12.

²³ Hindustan Times, Op.cit.

²⁴ Shrinand Jha, "South Bihar Industrialists", Observer, Delhi, 11 February 1998 (since Laloo's accession on the political scene of Bihar, ten thousand of total units have been declare as dead. About 15 percent of total unit is a state of near closure).

is exclusively to woo those sections, who earlier supported the Congress and now it's turn of BJP.

Thus, the shift from its earlier stand on separate state issues, which was guided by the RSS has a magnetic effect on among the tribals as well as non-tribals. It is premature to say that BJP has emerged all of sudden. In carrying out its political task, it has been able to call on the strong organisation network of RSS/VHP/VKA, which has been engaged in developing ties there since the late 1960s²⁵.

BJP realises that any blunt Hindutva appeal to the electorate will be counter productive. Thus, its strategy seems to capture power by down playing Hindutva, putting it on backburner for some time. At the same time associating Hindutva with some local and popular grievances against the state. Hindutva, which was defined by the RSS essentially in terms of anti-christian, has been retained by the BJP. Thus the central component of the BJP's political rhetoric in the region combines support for the long running demand for a separate state with an anti-christian, anti-westernised elite, anti-congress platform. With its Vananchal demand it contests with the Jharkhand parties.

²⁵ Russell Hocking, Op. cit, p. 166.

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

Bihar has always been on the forefront of political movements. During the colonial period, Bihar witnessed a massive peasant's movement, which aimed at breaking a highly exploitative landlordism under the leadership of Swami Sahjanand Saraswati. Subsequently, the anti-imperialist movement, which is being identified as the "national movement" particularly under the leadership of Gandhi, was also going on in Bihar. In mid 1970s JP movement was launched against the prevailing anarchy in the state of Bihar. It, in fact, challenged the hegemony of the Congress.

Besides these types of massive movements, there were other movements with a highly localised vision and short-term political gains. The emergence of backward caste movement is one of that variety in Bihar. Of course, it became a decisive force in the politics only after mid 60s. Similarly, the cow protection movement of early 1940s could also be referred to as one such movement. Since the Hindu identity and the revival of Hindu Dharma remained the driving force of this movement. Later, it assumed clear political tone on the form of Bhartiya Jan Sangh in Bihar.

Caste remains a dominant force of political mobilisation of Bihar. The politics of Bihar till 1967 was little more the story of intrigue and rivalry among the ruling upper castes. The upper crust among the middle castes has moved centre-stage. They have extended themselves in the power structure. The conflict between the backward and forward castes among forward castes themselves became sharper. Congress failed to adjust itself to the emerging reality. Many parties came forward to represent the emerging interest of backward castes. Also, the BJS was steadily gaining ground between 1952-67. BJS had very small following in Bihar due to the absence of refugee population and Arya Samaj movement, which directly or indirectly helped BJS to grow in other party of India. It drew support mainly from *Bania* and *Marwaris*. It was disparately looking for supports from other sections.

Two factors played an important role in BJS's rise in Bihar during 1952-67. The emerging balance of the caste alignment after the death of Shree Krishna Singh, alienated powerful Bhumihar community from the Congress. While a large number of middle and small Bhumihar peasants tilted towards the socialist, a section of erstwhile Jamindars and rich peasant veered round the Jan Sangh.

There was another factor that helped Jan Sangh to grow was the attitude of other non-Congress parties. Anti-congressism was gaining

ground among the socialist parties and BJS was obviously a naturally ally in such formation. It got first chance to participate in 1967 coalition government led by Mahamaya Sinha, whose experience was not so worth appreciating.

BJS participation in the first opposition government was bitter experience. Its vehement opposition to land reforms, the decision to recognise Urdu as official language and the decision to cancel Tata's Jamindari rights (lease). In spite of apparent sympathy from the conservative Hindu. BJS actually alienated itself from the majority population. It also created a chasm between the supporting partners of the government and till 1974 it remained aloof. Its popularity decreased considerably during this period.

The Bhartiya Jan Sangh supported the 1974 movement led by Jaiprakash Narain. Movement was culminated in the formation of Janata Party in which BJS also merged with it. The failure of Janata experiments forced BJS to come out of the Janata fold and to establish itself. Thus, emerged the BJP in 1980.

Its beginning was not at all promising. In 1984 election, it drew blank. Subsequently it improved its tally and in 1995 it emerged to second largest party in Bihar assembly. Its growth throughout Bihar

is not uniform and the reason is not very far to seek. In central Bihar BJP Samata alliance proved to be a decisive force as the caste composition of this region is conducive to the polarisation of BJP Vs non-BJP. BJP successfully rallied around itself the dominant landed class, which earlier was divided along the caste line. In north Bihar, BJP is yet to get any solid alliance partner who might help it to get the support of Yadav, largely situated in this belt of Bihar. Muslim-Yadav alliance of Janata Dal is still dominating the north Bihar where BJP is yet to penetrate. Though it managed to get the support of some forward caste yet it is a party which can command the majority of Bihar.

The most notable achievement of BJP is its growth in South Bihar, that is, Chotanagpur-Santhal Pargana region. Reasons for BJP's impressive performance in this region are : Demand for Vananchal and RSS's ground work.

Earlier BJP and its predecessor BJS were opposed to the formation of a separate tribal state as it would foster separatist tendency throughout the India and would create a national problem. Since the Church supported this demand, BJP opposed it vehemently with the resurgence of Jharkhand movement in 1980s compelled BJP to consider the demand for a separate state. Finally, it incorporated

the demand for a Vananchal state in its political agenda. The difference in name was just to project itself different from the other parties supporting the demand for a Jharkhand state. The proposed Vananchal would be made by carving out 18 districts of South Bihar.

The significance of Vananchal is that it gives a new kind of identity to the tribals based on their way of life, that is, forest (Van) at the same time the demand seems to be practical, feasible and viable. BJP called them Vanvasi (instead of calling them Adivasi) is essentially not to antagonise the dominant community (migrant Hindu) by denigrating their position. As BJP does not want to lose its hold over the traditional voters whom RSS has meticulously cultivated with its prolonged activities. So, it adopted a mid-way strategy, which will satisfy the both community. BJP's use of term of Vanvasi is significant as it does not negate the claim of the Hindu migrants, the first settler at the same time Adivasi would feel happy by associating themselves with the tribal's way of life.

RSS has been active in this region since 1960s through its various organisations namely *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP) and *Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram* (VKA) which provide material incentives to tribal children and encourage them to take admission in the Schools run by RSS. Many industrialists adopt as many as 10 to 30 schools

which cost them around 1 crore annually. The other organisation like *Eklavya Khelkud Prakalpa* is involved in promoting sport talents among tribal's etc. The facilities and concomitant programmes represent an attempt to counter the activities of the Christian organisations in this region and promote the integration of tribals into the Hindutva communities.

Thus, the central component of the BJP's political rhetoric in the region combines support for the long running demand for a separate state with an anti-Christian, anti-westernised elite, anti-Congress platform emphasising cultural renewal and integration.

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|---------------------------|----------------|
| Frontiline | (Delhi) |
| India Today | (Delhi) |
| Prabhat Khabar (in Hindi) | (Ranchi) |
| The Economic Times | (Delhi) |
| The Hindu | (Delhi) |
| The Hindustan Times | (Delhi, Patna) |
| The Observer | (Delhi) |
| The Organizer | (Delhi) |
| The Patriot | (Delhi) |
| The Pioneer | (Delhi) |
| The Statesman | (Calcutta) |
| The Telegraph | (Calcutta) |
| The Times of India | (Delhi, Patna) |