INTRODUCTION

The politics of democracy is characterised by leaders interacting with followers in a situation in which the followers elect the leaders. Competitive elections, therefore, are the hallmark of democracy. Robert Dehl, in a fascinating introduction to democratic theory, suggests that political parties and elections are two requisite institutions of any democracy. The former, provide for competition among leaders, and the latter provide the opportunity for non-leaders to choose among the leaders. Political parties are coalitions of publics and groups, organised to make nominations and contest elections in the hope of eventually gaining and exercising control of the personnel and policies of government.

Political parties are eventually regarded as the "lifeline of modern politics" in any democracy. It is regarded as axiomatic that any country which is either modern or wants

to be so considered will channel its political life in terms of some type of party expression. The absence or suppression of parties is regarded as a mark of political backwardness or of retrogression of political development. La Palombbara and Myron Weiner hold rightly that political party is a "creature of modern and modernizing political systems." Modern democratic systems would cease to function effectively in the absence of political parties. All the major institutional and functional activities in a representative democracy are performed by political parties.

In a democratic set up, working smoothly and effectively the party which succeeds in obtaining a majority at the hustings, formulates the policies and programmes of the government and implements them in the furtherance of its objectives. Other political parties, known usually as minority parties or opposition parties, are not unimical entities, but form the core of the structure of democratic government. They assiduously, make use of the system of checks and balances against the party in power to yield desired results. And, as and when the opportunity presents itself, they are ever prepared to

provide an alternative government. Political activity in a society finds its expression in an articulate manner through political parties, which compete for political power by identifying with one group and by differentiating from others. A party signifies partnership within a particular organization and separation from others by specific programme and leadership. Parties fight the political battles of the ballot, thereby forming a government and an opposition according to election results. A viable party system is one in which there is a constant alternative to the government. A democracy works smoothly and effectively when there is a viable alternative to the government because politics is an organised conflict for power and every group in society has the liberty to participate and capture power in a democratic set up. The existence and extent of the political liberties is manifested in the presence of a viable alternative to the government, that is, the opposition, and is perhaps the most crucial test of a democracy within a country.

Parliamentary democracy in India, as in United Kingdom, is based on the simple majority principle, with adequate safeguards for all people in the country. The principle of majority to form a government has been accepted on the postulate

that: "Where unanimity is lacking, where preferences are divided, it is the greater, rather than the lesser number of preferences that should prevail, since the greater number is nearer to being the whole number."

The Indian democracy took off with the distinct advantage of being the offspring of a mature British democracy. But the Indian conditions and circumstances, in which this type of system was introduced were totally different. In the west political democracy developed as an organised political expression of liberalism. As the values of liberalism got integrated with the political life of western countries, the institution of parliamentary democracy came to acquire an increasing stability. With the passage of time the introduction and recognition of a viable alternative to the government in the form of the opposition became an integral part of the process of the institutionalization of parliamentary democracy. In the west, people imbibed democratic beliefs and values as part of their political culture due to a gradual and balanced social mobilization process.


Time factor, which helped the gradual growth of democratic institutions, as of a viable alternative to the government in the form of an effective opposition alternating in power has been absent in the Indian context. Whereas attainment of independence was a result of a long and heroic struggle of the people of India against the British colonial rulers, the adoption of parliamentary democracy was just an outcome of some years of mature deliberations of constitution makers and a wholesale 'transplant' of the system. It was more an imposed, than a natural option.

Consequently, the alternative to the Congress Party which was initially a movement identified with the national movement in India, could not emerge immediately. The universally accepted form of the opposition party in a democracy, as a party, for the time being, in minority organised as a unity and officially recognised, having experience of office and prepared to form a government when the existing ministry lost the confidence of the people, could not take form in India. Thus a system of highly organised parties that could secure that those who win votes by what they promise shall lose them by what they fail to do could not take roots immediately after independence.

Even the introduction of single majority ballot system, which is supposed to help the emergence of two party system, did not yield such a result. Rather, in India, there emerged a form of party system which is characterised as Dominant Party system. A single major party emerged to overshadow various minor parties; other parties existed, but were not so effective as to challenge effectively the power position of the ruling party. No doubt, in a dominant party system, as existed in India, other parties exist legally, but for reasons unrelated to legal questions or government coercion, find themselves unable to challenge effectively the dominant party's hold on public power.

Importance of opposition in this system does not lie in their role as alternatives, but in the fact that they are the best insurance against the abuse of power and tyranny of the dominant party and the legislature. These parties act as parties of pressure. They constantly pressurise and influence the


dominant party and they expect to gain only where the dominant party loses. The one-party dominance model is generally characterised by the presence of the dominance of one party co-existing with inter-party and intra-party complexion. It presupposed the stable and continuous authority of the dominant ruling party from its comfortable majority in the legislatures, and though the dominant party tended to repress the opposition, there had always been a positive communication between them.

The above situation prevailed in the Indian political process till 1967 the year when "the long period of congress 13 dominance came to an end." But still to say that the fourth general elections caused a sudden breakdown in the monolithic structure of one party dominant system, is to enter a controversial topic. Many scholars considered the end of one party dominance an established fact, whereas others viewed this idea as a "hasty generalisation". The degree of disagreement not withstanding, one cannot deny the fact that the election results made a major break-through in the gradually shifting political contours of the power structure in majority of the states by bringing to an end twenty years of virtual one-party rule.

Non-Congress governments in the states of Bihar, Kerala, Orissa, Punjab, West Bengal formed straightway alternative coalition governments. These were joined by Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, where, shortly formed Congress government lost their majorities as a result of considerably large number of political defections. However, the Congress dominance at the Centre had remained intact though its strength had considerably declined. However, even in the states the uneasy and shifting coalition governments could not provide an alternative to the Congress as in many states these coalition governments were able to survive on Congress support only.

Since independence Congress has remained a macro-political system, a sort of federal arrangement, holding together micro-sub-systems - the factions, forums, groups, lobbies, etc., which keep constantly interacting on the political processes of the Congress. This vast infra-structure based on considerations of caste, interest, region, and personality and reflecting in politics the division in society and variegation of power seekers, has been maintained by the common eagerness of the decisive regional elite that has penetrated the echelons of power, once the Congress became the Establishment. This collection for convenience, an aggregate for advantage slowly and gradually changed the character of the Congress and the Congressmen. Their survival at the crest of power, and their capacity for political patronage depends on the continuance of
the Congress as an amorphous body—ideologically and organizationally. This medley of leadership had no interest in principled politics, but only and exclusively in power politics. The same features were reflected even in the state organizations of the federal set up.

The adoption of parliamentary federal structure was made in view of the existence of territorial, cultural, linguistic, religious and socio-economic differences among the people of the country. However, the emergence and development of party system of a unique nature genuinely provided a support base to the trends in centralization, offsetting the impact of the forces which could have otherwise prompted the pluralistic tendencies to grow. Yet the development of party systems at various state levels did not follow even casually the national pattern. In the organization and spirit of their politics the states varied markedly. No doubt, the impact of national policies and parties powerfully affected the form and behaviour of state systems but the impact was different in different states, contributing to the oddities and variations in organization and spirit of the informal aspects of state politics. In the states over and above a national party system, there have been interacting a number of multi-party systems, the compulsions of the federal policy providing bases for decentralization and weakening the cohesiveness in the dominant party. The reflection of social structures and regional forces of each state on its
party organization and development of a political alternative has contributed to the operation of the party system. The distinctiveness of each state party system has been particularly marked by the fact that after the fourth general elections though the Congress remained the predominant party nationally, its ability to retain dominance at the state level declined. It initiated a process of polarization in the political parties, which had been lacking till then. Even in this period (1967-71) the Congress continued to remain the major political groups in the Bihar legislative Assembly. This change, therefore, was seen more as a period of transition caused by the erosion of the Congress system and its ability to contain divergent forces within its rank into some sort of a consensus. That is why when in 1972 Assembly elections the Congress party regained its dominant place in the Legislative Assembly of Bihar, the situation was portrayed as the restoration of one party dominance system. But finally the great change effected through the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections of 1977 was thought to initiate a new phase in the nature of party-politics and the prospects of the emergence of a viable alternative to the Congress system both at the Centre as well as in some of the northern states including Bihar. It was regarded as a change from one phase of political development

that came to an end and the 'transition to another that is yet to take shape.' The change was considered to be the result of a steady decline in consensus.

The Sixth Lok Sabha elections in India, held in March 1977, and the subsequent Assembly elections in June states were historic and unique. They were without a parallel and have undoubtedly been regarded as a watershed in India's post-independence history. The results of these elections not only brought to a dramatic end of the 21 months of emergency, 11 years of Mrs. Gandhi's rule, three decades of Congress hegemony at the centre, the non-existence of an alternative to the Congress, and Congress dominance in the northern states of Bihar, U.P., Punjab, Karyana, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Gujarat.

What is attempted to set out in this study is to describe, explain and assess the origin, organization, growth process and decline of the Janata Party as an alternative to the Congress in Bihar in the national perspective. It is not totally a study of state politics from the state rather an attempt to analyse the effects of the state politics on the national politics and vice-versa.

15. [*ibid*]
(a) Bihar presents an ideal picture of a highly cleaved and backward society. It is the richest and poorest state of India. It is the richest in resources, and the poorest in the condition of its people.

(b) It reflects in a micro-form the national power game of politics between the political parties. The origin, development and the emerging pattern of political parties in Bihar don't present any striking dissimilarities from their counterparts in other states in the country. There are the same all-India parties, the more or less same splinter parties and groups on the Left, the Right and the Centre that one comes across other parts of the country.

(c) Jaya Prakash Narayan, acknowledged as the architect of the Janata Party which emerged as the alternative to the Congress both at the Centre as well as in many states including Bihar, spearheaded the movement against the Congress and Mrs. Gandhi from Bihar. Thus Bihar was the waterloo of Mrs. Gandhi.

(d) Emergency was imposed due to the Gujarat and Bihar movements of protests against the corrupt incumbent Congress governments, put down in many places with great force and bloodshed. In the words of Mrs. Gandhi "democracy was murdered in Bihar and Gujarat." The popular language or rhetoric

of the movement around Narayan, contained a vocabulary of revolt and non-cooperation; of civil disobedience derecognition of government and 'total revolution' which required repression.

(e) India's peculiar and 'ubiquitous' caste system which is recognised as the 'steel frame' of the Indian society, constituting the most important conflict determinant of politics and the unit of social action has a free-play in the society of Bihar. The emergence of the Janata Party brought an end to the dominance of the 'Forward' castes in Bihar which had continued since independence and replaced the 'Backward' castes as the dominant structure in the state.

(f) The emergence of the Janata Party in Bihar presented an opportunity to the hitherto political havens, i.e. the non-Congress political parties and groups to taste the fruits of power and to project before the people of the state an image different from their predecessors, which they had been claiming to do if and when they got a chance. But the reservation policy for the backwards initiated by the Janata Chief Minister Karpoori Thakur brought about a situation of direct confrontation between the so-called 'forwards' and 'backwards' ruining the prospects of the Janata Party to emerge as the alternative to the Congress within the state of Bihar. In April 1979 a combination of a Forward-Harijan alliance in the Assembly and the national level Jan Sangh-BLD conflict within the Janata party brought down the Thakur government. The succeeding
ministry headed by Ram Sunder Das, a Harijan, and backed by the same combination that had defeated Karpoori Thakur, in the end proved to be short-lived one. Thus both the intra-party conflict and caste conflicts, the first one reflecting the mirror image of the conflict at the centre and the other reflecting the inner caste conflicts within the state. Janata Party provide us a rich material to assess the explosive combination of caste and intra-party conflict in the Janata Party that ruined the party in Bihar. We propose to examine the conflicts and cohesion, the achievements and failures, the rise and fall of the Janata Party in the socio-economic background of the state of Bihar.

**Organization of the Study**

The present study is organized into six chapters. Chapter I presents a socio-economic profile of the society in Bihar and traces the evolution, growth and penetration of different political parties in the state and attempts to delineate their social bases. This chapter attempts to bring out the party-position of different political parties and traces the rise of Janata Party. Chapter II is an attempt to trace the causes of the emergence of Janata Party in the light of political developments in Bihar. This chapter analyses the various factors that gave rise to this party both at the national as well as at the state levels. Chapter III deals with the organization of the Janata Party both at the centre and the state. It delineates the various steps which were taken to merge the disinterested political parties, the
joining of the Congress for Democracy led by Jagjivan Ram, the combined programme, policy and campaign strategy of the party and its victory in the 1977 Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections in Hindi-speaking belts including the state of Bihar. The reactions to the victory of the Janata party in the foreign, national and regional press have been collected to illuminate the political and public image of the Janata Party. Chapter IV attempts to gauge the working of the Janata Party in Bihar in its 28-months rule. Its achievements in the various socio-economic and political fields have been enumerated and examined.

Chapter V, conversely, deals with the failures of the Janata Party. Its failure may be ascribed to the leadership conflict within the party. Consequently its failure to operate properly at the centre due to intra-parties conflict within its constituents was reflected in the conflict at the Bihar state level. The causes, factors and consequences of the conflicts have, therefore, been traced. In the light of the above, chapter VI is an attempt to show whether the Janata Party could emerge as a political alternative to the Congress in Bihar. Chapter VII as usual presents the summary and conclusion of the study.