CHAPTER III

STRIDE TOWARDS POWER
The emergence of Janata Party in 1977 was an event of major significance in the history of Indian politics. It was the outcome of a deliberate polarisation of five non-communist parties namely Congress (O), the BJD, the Jana Sangh, and the Congress for Democracy. This merger of five different parties was not a traditionally arranged marriage of different political parties but an outcome of exigencies of circumstances. The party general secretary Mr. Ram Krishna Hegde stated in a press conference at Delhi on 9th June 1977 said, "we all fell in love in jails with each other". He further said "If a husband and wife after a love marriage could take some time to adjust with one another naturally emotional integration among five parties could not be immediate. It would be gradual."

Since independence the Congress party had remained in power at the centre and in most of the states. Due to the existence of large number by political parties the opposition used to be divided and the Congress got the opportunity of being the single largest party and consequently ruled the country.

2. Ibid.
From the first to the fifth Lok Sabha elections Congress party remained the sole ruling party in the country. But as Jayaprakash Narain noted in his prison's diary on 15th August 1975, "If the opposition parties had been united the Congress rule would have ended long ago." He expressed the hope that "the opposition having passed through fire of dictatorship" would unite to pose a common front against Congress misrule and average as an alternative to it. Thus Elections for the Sixth Lok Sabha were announced though Morarji Desai reacted sharply and said, "How shall we prepare for elections in so short time," and George Fernandis advocated boycott of Elections, J.P. advised them to work unitedly and suggested the opposition parties to form a single party. Consequently the leaders of four non-communist parties formed a united front named Janata Party which was projected as an alternative to the Congress. This polarisation of political forces took place within forty-eight hours of the release of the arrested leaders during Emergency. A new wave of optimism had already

5. Ibid.
6. Dr. Manenkar and Kamla Mannenkar, Decline and fall of Indira Gandhi (New Delhi, 1977), p.185.
engulfed the opposition to fight the Congress through a united front.

The first meeting of the leaders of opposition the Congress (O) the socialists, the Jansangh, and the BLD was held at 5 Duplex Road Delhi at the residence of Morarji Desai on 19th January 1977. After discussion they agreed to face the election under the banner of Janata party. Amongst those who attended the meeting were A.B. Vajpayee and O.P. Tyagi of Jana Sangh, Ashok Mehta and S.N. Mishra of Congress (O), Madhu Dandvate and Samar Guha of Socialist and Piloo Modi and Biju Patnaik of BLD. The move to form the Janata Party which was begun in Tihar Jail in a meeting held at ward No.1 on 4th January 1977, was reinforced in these meetings."

These parties declared their formal merger and unanimously decided to keep one flag, one chairman and one executive (National Committee) on January 20, 1977. The Janata party was launched on 23rd January 1977. Morarji Desai was elected chairman of the party, the former chief minister of U.P. Charan Singh

11. Manenkar and Manenkar, op.cit, p.186.
was elected Vice-Chairman, Surendra Mohan, Ram Dhan and L.K. Advani were elected General Secretaries and Mr. Shanti Bhushan was elected the treasurer of the party. The other members of the committee were Ashok Mehta, A.V. Vajpayee, Bhanu Pratap Singh, Bhairo Singh Sekhawat, Biju Patnaik, C.B. Gupta, Chand Ram, Chandra Sekhar, H.M. Patel, K.S. Thakre, Mrinal Gore, M. Sanjiva Reddy, Nana Ji Deshmukh, M.G. Gore, P. Ramchandran, Samar Gupta, Shyam Nandan Mishra, Sikander Bakht, P.C. Sen and Karpoori Thakur.

J.P. Advocated the idea of opposition unity at a conference of members of non-communist opposition parties to Delhi. He advised the leaders of different political parties not to contest elections on the basis of different identity. He further advised that only two rival candidates be put up in the elections one put by ruling party and the other by the opposition united front as Janata Pratishthi.

C. F. D.

The Congress for Democracy, a later constituent of the Janata Party, was a result of defection of some of the members of the Congress Party. J. Ram, a prominent leader of the Congress and cabinet minister since 1946, resigned from the party with

his followers and formed a new party named as congress for democracy on February 2, 1977. The associates of Mr. J. Ram were H. N. Bahuguna, Mrs. Mandini Satpathi, Mr. K. R. Ganesh and Raj Mangal Pandey. H. N. Bahuguna and Nandini Satpathy were appointed as general secretary of the party.

This party too promised to merge with the Janata party. Initially, it was demanding more seats in Lok Sabha Election in Bihar and U.P. and M.P. but later entered an alliance with the Janata party for the Sixth Lok Sabha elections though it did not formally merge with the Janata party. CPD made adjustment with Janata party in Bihar and U.P. on 16 seats, in Maharashtra on 10 seats, and in Assam and M.P. on 4 and 1 seats respectively.

BIHAR

As in the centre and other states, in Bihar too, the State units of Bihar Congress (O) Jan Sangh, Socialist party, and BLD decided to fight the Sixth Lok Sabha election under the banner

17. Ibid.
18. The Indian Express, 3.2.1977.
20. Ibid.
21. Times of India, Delhi, 18.2.1977.
of the Janata Party. Satyandra Narain Sinha was elected the chief of the Janata party in Bihar. Ramanand Tiwari and Karpoori Thakur were also in the state executive of the Janata party. All other leaders of four non-communist parties collected under the flag of Janata party lock stock and barrel.

**1977 Elections of Lok Sabha** - Immediately after setting up of the national committee the party took the following important decisions for the coming election:

1. The party appointed a sub-committee for drafting an Election Manifesto;
2. It directed its state units to recommend candidates for contesting elections within ten to twelve days.
3. The party decided to contest the Lok Sabha elections on the BLD symbol.
4. The party decided to enter into electoral alliances with the other political parties like the Akali Dal, the DMK and others.
5. The party appointed regional leaders to supervise its election activities and coordinate multiple jobs involved in Lok Sabha elections:
   a. Charan Singh was to be in charge of northern India for the conduct of elections. Punjab, Haryana, U.P., M.P., Bihar, Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir were placed under his charge.
(b) P.C. Sen was appointed to supervise the elections in Eastern India and he was responsible for elections in West Bengal, Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Orissa, Nagaland Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

(c) N. Sanjiva Reddy was made responsible for elections in the southern states.

(d) S.M. Joshi was party leader for Maharashtra, Babu Bhai Patel for Gujarat and Erasmo Sequera was to look after elections in Goa.

The regional leaders or convenors of the party were authorized to appoint, conveners for different states to identify nominees for elections.

Charan Singh appointed conveners for state party units for selection of party candidates in elections. His nominees for Bihar were Satyandra Narain Sinha and Karpooori Thakur who were

* Times of India, Delhi, 25.1.1977.

His nominees for others were:

1. Rishi Kumar Kaushal - Jammu & Kashmir
2. Baldev Prakash - Punjab and Chandigarh
3. Chand Ram - Haryana
4. Vijay Kumar Malhotra - Delhi
5. Bhamu Pratap Singh - U.P.
6. Kishori Lal - Himachal Pradesh
7. Kushabhan Thakre - Andhra Pradesh
8. Panna Lal Surana - Maharashtra
9. Babu Bhai Patel - Gujarat
10. Virendra Patil - Karnataka
11. P. Ramchandra - Tamil Nadu & Pondicherry
12. B.S. Sekhawat - Rajasthan
13. Biju Patnaik - Orissa

Hindustan Times, Delhi 30.1.1977.
appointed as president and convener respectively for election committee for Bihar.

The appointment of convenors reflected quota system in the Janata Party. The Jansangh, the BLD and Congress (O) took over the leadership of states where they exercised greater influence than any other constituent of the Janata. The post convenor in Rajasthan was given to Jan Sangh while the responsibility in U.P., M.P., Bihar, Haryana and Orissa was taken over by the B.L.D. It may be stated here that the Janata had no alternative except to involve various groups in organising elections. It was obvious then that the party organization for contesting the elections would reflect the relative strength of its four constituent groups. In the list of fourteen leaders nominated for supervising elections in various states, prominent, Jan Sangh and BLD representatives were conspicuous by their presence. Charan Singh and his associates nominated party candidates for elections to strengthen their own control in the party.

The Janata party nominated its candidates for all the 394 Lok Sabha seats. The party agreed to leave 32 seats for Lok Sabha for Congress for democracy and 134 seats for candidates

23. Indian Express, 8.2.1977.
of its electoral allies like the DMK, CPI (M) and Akali Dal. The strategy of election was based on a united opposition to the Congress so that united opposition to the anti-democratic forces were not divided in their opposition to authoritarianism of the Congress party. The Janata Party contested more seats on its own in those states where its four constituent groups enjoyed sufficient political support. In Rajasthan, U.P., Bihar, Orissa, and Haryana, the Janata Party and its coalition partners contested almost all seats for the Lok Sabha. In West Bengal, Punjab, Kerala, Maharashtra, Janata opted to contest minimum seats and its allies were major contestants against the Congress. The Janata party concentrated its attention on those areas of electoral contest where its constituent groups were formidable. It made electoral adjustments and left many seats. In Punjab, Kerala, and West Bengal to its electoral allies. In the important northern states it nominated its own candidates for election. The number of seats contested by the party also reveals that it was making a serious attempt to dislodge Congress party from powers and emerge as a real alternative to the Congress in Indian politics.


Atmosphere before the Lok Sabha elections

The Janata Party proved to be an alliance not only of political parties but also of political communities. The Iman of Jama Masjid Sayad Abdullah Bukhari exhorted Muslims on Friday prayer meetings to vote against Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress because they were responsible for the Turkman gate episode in which many Muslims had been killed. Further, the Akali Dal leader, Mohan Singh Tur appealed to all Sikhs to vote for the Janata and said, "Janata victory is a victory of Akali Dal." Thus, eminent Muslim and Sikh leaders sided with the Janata alliance. The breaking away of Jagjivan Ram from the Congress alienated the much talked of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe votes from the Congress. In fact, therefore, the alliance of the constituent units of Janata was not only an alliance of political parties but also of religious and communal groups in the Indian politics.

Congress Campaign

Inaugurating the campaign Mrs. Gandhi dismissed the Janata Party as "mish-mash a Kichari of parties that included RSS and the Marxists." Raising a clenched fist she declared that if necessary "we will shed our blood and give our

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28. During emergency firing was near Turkman gate in which 10 persons killed that area is thickly populated by Muslims, Indian Express, 26.2.1977.

lives but we will not allow the country to be weakened."

Referring to the opposition's criticism against the Emergency and about political detainees Mrs. Gandhi stated "I want to make it clear that there is no government anywhere in the world and no other Prime Minister who would tolerate the opposition as much as we do." One of her supporters reiterated "that those detained in jails should have thankful to Mrs. Gandhi. In any country bullets have been in store for them. She only detained them."

At Contai in West Bengal addressing a public meeting on February 19, Mrs. Gandhi said, "These groups have come together to encircle me and stab me. In Bhopal she remained the public that RSS was behind the murder of the father of the Nation. In Punjab Mrs. Gandhi tried to set the Sikhs against Janata party by saying that RSS and Jana Sangh had always opposed Punjabi Suba and the Punjabi language. Making Jan Sangh her butt of

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30. Dr. Manenkar Kamla Menankar, *Decline & Fall of Indira Gandhi*, op.cit, p.189.

31. Ibid.


33. S.B. Chavan, Chief Minister of Maharashtra in an election campaign supported the views of Mrs. Gandhi.

34. Vishwabandhu (Calcutta), 20.2.1977.
attach she said at a public gathering in Ranchi on February 27, that the Janata party's foundation rested not on Gandhi's principle but on those of the RSS and Jan Sangh. She also charged that a great leader (meaning J.P.) had incited the police and army to revolt. She even alleged that her former colleagues (Reference to J. Ram) tried to stab her in the back.

All this was too much for the audience to digest which raised anti-Congress and anti-Indira slogans in the meeting. That made her all the more furious. "The more you shout the bigger will be our victory" she shouted on the mike.

Janata Party Election Campaign

In its electoral campaign the Janata party leaders attempted to establish their credibility before the voters. They emphasised that the new party was not like S.V.D. governments, it was a serious attempt to dislodge the Congress from power and to create two party system in the country so that democracy could not be derailed in future by any single party.

Allowing Mrs. Gandhi to take a day's lead in inaugurating the Congress campaign, the Janata leaders began their campaign

36. Dr. Manenkar & Kamla Manenkar, op.cit, p.192.
37. A. B. Vijpayee referred emergence of two party system, Hindustan Times, Delhi, 11.3.1977.
on 6th February, J. Ram joined J.P. rally at Ramlila Maidan on
the inaugural day. The police recorded that the crowd at Janata
meeting was larger than the one addressed by Mrs. Gandhi. The
audience gave a standing ovation to J.P. and J. Ram, an unheard
thing at a mass public meeting in this country.

J.P. reiterated that "the fight was not between the two
parties the Congress and the Janata - but issues were of far
greater significance. The electorate, had to choose between 'de-
mocracy' and 'authoritarianism'. They were to ensure that the
frightful days of Emergency did not return again. Jayaprakash
Narain said that after much thinking he had come to the conclu-
sion that Mrs. Gandhi loved power. Janata party had no money like
Congress, therefore "We will need your votes and notes" both.

J. Ram said that before split of 1969 it was said that
five or six bosses ruled Congress party. In the past 19 months
the whole country was ruled by one and a half bosses (Indira &
her son).

In a final appeal at New Delhi three days before ele-
cision, J.P. stated, "Ruling party still swears by the black laws".
He had no doubt that they could no hesitate to use them again

   Election Campaign.
40. Dr. Manenkar Kamla Manenkar, Decline & Fall of Indira
if given a chance. This is your last chance. If you falter
19 months of tyranny shall become 19 years of terror. The Janata
party goal was progress and justice. Freedom is the first re-
quisite to achieve this goal when freedom is lost all is lost.
He further added that, "How can you end corruption when you
cannot talk or write about it ... They have tried to bribe you
with last minute concessions. Do not let any of these mislead
you. Be like Arjuna, and like him do not let your eyes wander
from the central issue of 'freedom ' or ' slavery ','democracy '
for 'dynastic dictatorship.' "

Public Response

In the election campaign the people refused to accept
gifts of the Congress party. In Amethi when Menka after seeing
a sick child offered to take him to a doctor, the mother turned
down the offer. Menka then suggested her if she did not want to
go alone she could take her husband along with her. The child's
mother at last spoke : " Why do you want my husband? For Nas-
bandi? " she hissed and went to her hut.

In U.P. when Janata workers distributed party flags to
villagers they were told not to waste their resources. " We
already have your flags", the villagers said with smile on their
lips. They had removed white portion of the Congress flags to

gather the green and orange and convert them into Janata Flags.

In Sasaram black flags were shown to Congress leaders.

Press Response

During Emergency all newspapers were classified into

three classes (1) Friendly, (2) Neutral and (3) Hostile to the

Congress. National Herald, a friendly paper alone was given ad-

vertisements of Rs.80000. All India Radio and Doordarshan were

under strict censurship, but other democratic and free mass me-

diate of communication like VDA and BBC clearly supported the

Janata campaign. Even Indian newspapers did not lag behind in

adulating the Janata Party even in the emergency. Times of India

said that Janata Party could change the present set up of the
country. Dharmyug in one of its editorials (7th March to 14th

March) by Dr. Dharmvir Bharati noted that Janata Party was un-
derable leadership of Jaya Prakash Narain. Indian Express, in one

of its editorial noted: This election will open a new chapter

in Indian politics. But most of the weeklies and newspapers

43. Indian Express, 29.2.1977.

44. Kamalapati Tripathi and Sita Ram Keshri were sown black

flags, Indian Nation 6.3.1977.

45. The Indian Express, Editorial, 1.3.1977.
had no courage to say anything against Indira Gandhi at that very time. Illustrated Weekly stated that Indira Gandhi was the most efficient leader of the country (Khushwant Singh). It is middle page famous picture by Way of Indira Gandhi as Durga was given. Hindu too predicted a favourable response to Congress in south. National Herald a pro-Congress paper commented Congress alone could give good administration to the country.

At the time of Election the emergency was not lifted. The Indian newspapers were only scanning the results but only some of them dated to write about the future. But foreign newspapers strongly supported Janata party, Guardian projected Janata party as the only alternative to the Congress.

Electoral Performance

The Janata Party brought an end to the thirty years of uninterrupted rule of the Congress by winning a clear majority in the Lok Sabha elections of 1977. The Janata Party with its ally CFD got 298 seats and the Congress could win back only 159 seats. The performance of Congress was very poor in Hindi speaking areas. In Bihar, all Lok Sabha seats were captured by the

Janata Party. An absolute majority in the Lok Sabha to the Janata Party acted as a catalyst to its unity and survival. The mandate of the Lok Sabha Elections of 1977 was clearly in favour of the government by the Janata Party.

A brief analysis of the Lok Sabha Elections of 1977 shows that the Congress party was wiped out of existence in the northern states where it won only two seats out of 44 percent of Lok Sabha seats allotted to U.P., Bihar, Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi. In eastern India too the Janata and its allies faired equally well. The Janata performance in southern states was poor and the Congress was 92 of the 129 seats in Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala. In the western states of Maharashtra and Gujarat the Congress and Janata shared equally a total of 48 and 26 seats.

The Janata Party's victory in the northern states was spectacular and its constituent groups like the Jan Sangh and the BLD which had a strong base in this part of India, gained a large number of seats. A lot of speculation has been made on the strength of various groups of Janata Party. It is estimated that the Congress groups i.e. Cong (C), TFD and other independent Congress men like Chandra Shekhar had a strength of 89 members. The Jan Sangh had 90 members. The BLD had 68 and Socialists had 51 members respectively in the Janata party rally of 298 members in Lok Sabha.
Party organisation (Janata Party)

The formal inauguration of Janata Party in May 1977 in the wake of its electoral victories in the Lok Sabha elections and subsequently a few state assemblies in June, were not adequate to establish its credentials as a viable national alternative to the Congress. The Janata Party victory was localised in northern states and it did not affect voters in the southern states. The party needed an organisation to spread its network both horizontally and vertically to perform its basic task of mobilising and influencing the voters in its favour.

The Janata Party leadership was not creating a party organisation on the basis of an utopia. The new organisational structure of the party was based on a few specific realities and the most important fact before the leadership was that all five constituent party organisations had to have a general and broad consensus regarding it. The leadership naturally had to show spirit of accommodation and adjustment of different viewpoints in the party. A basic promise of the leaders was that homogeneity would emerge in the party in course of time and it would be counterproductive to hasten the process of party cohesion though organisational structure like many processes of Janata party failed.

The Party Constitution

Political parties like all other modern organisations formally establish a hierarchy of relationship among their members for management of their affairs. A formal constitution of the party may provide for a structure of decision making and it may also specify roles of party functionaries. Every aspect of the party organisation cannot be determined by a formal constitution. The constitution at the best provides guidelines for management of the party affairs and it establish norms of relationship among members.

In India, two models of party organisation have existed and they provided an inspiration for new party structure. The first model of party organisation is provided by the Congress, based on the principles of a federal system with open membership and loose discipline. The second model of party organisation is provided by the Jansangh and communist parties which restrict their membership to ideologically committed people besides practising hierarchical relationship in party management. The five constituent groups of the Janata party were familiar with both the systems and they advocated their old systems. However, ultimately, the Janata Party, by and large, borrowed the main provision its constitution from the Indian National Congress.

Janata adopted an open membership policy and laid down certain qualifications for its members:

(a) He should be a habitual wearer of hand spun and hand woven khadi,
(b) Must abstain from alcoholic drinks and intoxicant drugs,
(c) Must not observe or recognise untouchability in any shape or form, and
(d) Must believe in communal unity.

Like the Congress Party the Janata also made a distinction between primary member and an active member. Any individual may become a primary member of the party by paying a subscription of Rs.1 only and may become an active member on payment of subscription of Rs.25 or on enrolling 25 primary members.

The party wanted to recruit large number of members to gain acceptability in the country and its strategy of open membership was geared to achieve such a goal. The party provided for an elected President, a National executive (which was earlier known as Working Committees), a Parliamentary Board, General secretaries and a treasurer. The National Executive was the highest executive authority of the party and its fortyfive members were responsible for implementing the policies and

programmes of the party as laid down by the National Council. The National Council Executive was final authority in all disciplinary matters in the party. In democracy parties establish close link with other institutions of governance of the country. A Parliamentary Board was created to regulate and coordinate party activities in the legislature. Its nine members were appointed by the National Executive. The constitution also provided for state and local level organisations of the party and it defined the role of local party functionaries. The party also framed rules to implement various articles of the constitution.

National Executive

National Council (28)

State Executive (9 members)

District (17 members)

Block 5 Members
1 Secretary

Implementation of party constitution

The formal structure of the party was prepared in April 1977 to facilitate proposed merger of constituent groups on May 1, 1977. The first step in party organisation was to identify functionaries for implementation of party programmes. Chandra Sekhar was appointed as Party president on the basis of consensus among the leaders of various groups in the party. The party was creating its organisation under very special circumstances. It established an adhoc working committee (later known as National Executive) and broad based its membership to include all its major groups. With this preparation the party emerged on Indian political scene embodying one spirit, one body, one ideal. On assuming the party office Chandra Shekhar said, "it would be his endeavour to bring about the complete integration of the erstwhile constituent units of the party." The pious wishes of the party unity were expressed by all leaders.

It may be stated that the speed with which things were moving even a bare minimum of agreement in the party could be reached by accommodating various group interests. Chandra Shekhar was named as party president by an agreement between Morarji Desai and Charan Singh and an adhoc Committee was established in May 1977, for one year or until such time that party members

52. Times of India, 2.5.1977.
53. The Indian Express, Delhi, 3.5.1977.
54. The Hindu, Madras, 4.5.1977.
55. The Times of India, 15.5.1977.
could be enrolled for electing permanent functionaries. The adhoc functionaries continued to work for 28 months of the united Janata Party because the constituent groups could not agree on the mode of enrolment of members for the election of party functionaries.

The membership of the party working committee had three categories (a) members (b) permanent invitees (c) special invitees. In this manner all important leaders could find a berth in the highest policy making organ of the party. The five general secretaries were appointed by the president on the basis of group affiliations. The Jan Sangh, the Socialist, the Congress (O), the BLD had their general secretaries in the persons of Nanaji Deshmukh, Madhulimaye, Rabi Ray, Bijai Singh Nahar, and Ramananda Hegde respectively. Nanaji Deshmukh preferred party general secretaryship to a cabinet post offered to him in March 1977.

The Bihar State Janata Party chief was S.N. Singha of Congress (O), the Vice President of the Janata party was Dr. Swami Nath Tiwari of Jan Sangh and Ramananda Tiwari was a member of State Executive Committee from the socialist group. There were nine members of the Executive Committee. In this three members were from former Jan Sangh group, two were from Congress (O), two were from Socialist and two were from BLD group. To sum up, the Janata Party created an adhoc organisation to
accommodate the realities and thus pursue the policy of quota system of constituent groups while distributing party offices. Even the first list of Cabinet announced by Morarji Desai gave due representation to the various groups in the Janata Party. Jagjiwan Ram, Gorge Fernandis and Raj Narain were reluctant to join Desai's Cabinet but the public pressure mounted on them to accept the offer and maintain the unity of the party. The party revealed serious differences in its working just after it electoral victory. Jagjiwan Ram had earlier said that Cabinet would have two members from each constituent groups, like Congress (O), Jan Sangh, Socialist, BLD, CFD and Akali Dal. He was surprised when Desai gave list of 19 members instead of 12 as agreed by the leaders. The quota basis in the cabinet was revealed when Nanaji Deshmukh declined to be a minister and Brijlal Verma of Jan Sangh was appointed as its substitute. Nanaji Deshmukh preferred to serve the party.

Assembly Electionsof 1977

Background

Just after the formation of the Janata government at Centre, the Janata party leaders and the citizens of India

56. The Indian Express, 30.3.1977.
57. The Indian Express, 29.3.1977.
58. The Indian Nation, Patna, 2.5.1977.
started demanding dissolution of Congress ruled assemblies and holding of early elections on the ground of the total rejection of the Congress party in the Lok Sabha elections of 1977. Jaya Prakash Narayan addressing a press conference in Jaslok hospital, Bombay, on 2nd April 1977, observed that the election of State assemblies should be held as early as possible so that "we have new representatives who are in tune with the union government and the people could get chance to elect their new representatives as the change had taken place at the centre."

The Union Home Minister Charan Singh on 18th April without getting report from the governors of States advised C.M.'s of nine Congress ruled States namely Bihar, M.P., U.P., Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan to advise their governors to dissolve state assemblies as the Congress party was totally rejected by the people in the Lok Sabha Elections. Y.B. Chavan, the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha, criticised Mr. Charan Singh's step. The Congress Chief Ministers too opposed the advise of Charan Singh and they said that states were fully free to function within their respective spheres. The

59. The Indian Nation, 20.4.1977
60. The Statesman, Bombay, 4.4.1977.
61. The Indian Express, Delhi, 20.4.1977.
62. The Times of India, 22.4.1977.
suit petition was filed under Article 131 of the Constitution of India by the six Congress ruled states, in the Supreme Court. As this suit was rejected by the Court. On 30th April 1977 under Article 356 (1) of the Constitution of India the government dissolved state assemblies of nine Congress ruled states without getting advise from the concerned governors. This step of B.D. Jatti was unprecedented. It was for the first time in the political history of India that a large number of assemblies were dissolved without getting any advise from the governors of the states and president rules was imposed.

This step of the president was criticised by the Chief Ministers of the Congress ruled states and Congress leaders. In a joint statement the Congress Working Committee said that the dissolution of state assemblies was a sad and unfortunate event in the constitutional and parliamentary history of India.

**Bihar Assembly Elections**

When the Bihar assembly was dissolved on 6th April 1977 there was a huge rush for tickets of the Janata party because the Janata wind appeared to be lowing in the right direction.

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However, the absence of J.P. from the Bihar election scene at this stage due to his hospitalization, added to the Janata's difficulties while dealing with the exaggerated claims in regard to the distribution of tickets put forward by the Sangh-arsh Samiti. The Samiti was promised a good share of assembly seats, as many as 125 seats according to the Samiti promised by the Janata as far back as the Lok Sabha polls a couple of months earlier. The fire bands of the Samiti insisted upon the Janata to honour its promise. The Samiti also insisted that the tickets should not be given to defectors from other parties and that the criteria laid down by J.P. for the choice of candidates should be followed scrupulously. But in the light of political developments, logical or otherwise, these claims of the Samiti could not be accepted.

The youth who formed the backbone of the Samiti had looked upon the dissolution of state assembly as their own achievement. This was because they were in the forefront of the struggle for dissolution long before the Janata Party had been formed and appeared on the political horizon in the heartland of north India.

66. Sheil & Lal', Elections under the Janata Rule Delhi, 1978, p.3.
Candidates

The number of candidates for the 318 members assembly totalled 1338 in 1957, 15229 in 1962, 2045 in 1969 and 1982 in 1972. But the election scene of June 1977 was unusual. This time record number of 2994 candidates were in the field in Bihar. Of this about 2350 were independents. This number was much larger than the total number of candidates in Bihar in previous elections.

The environment, however, was not congenial for the independents as they had been defeated badly in March 1977 Lok Sabha polls. In Bihar out of 208 candidates 207 had forfeited their security. The only independent who escaped this humiliation had contested from Scheduled Tribe Constituency of Khunti in Ranchi district with the backing of Hul Jharkhand Party.

The record number of candidates this time can be attributed to the reemergence of the caste factor which had been buried in the Lok Sabha elections. Leaders of all political parties conceded that this factor played an important role in the assembly poll. Some candidates had fielded Independents belonging to the caste of their rivals in a bid to split votes.

68. The Indian Nation, 24.3.1977.
Another reason was late finalisation of the Janata Party list. After finalisation of the list the candidates who were denied tickets fielded as independent candidates against the rejection of their claims.

The Janata party set candidates in 311 constituencies. The Congress, on the other hand, contested on 284 seats leaving the rest for the C.P.I. in an alliance adjustment, though the alliance had not worked out well. The C.P.I. had set up candidates for a total number of 75 seats in Bihar. As a result the Janata, the Congress and the C.P.I. faced each other in as many as 32 multi-cornered contests.

There were 17 C.P.I (M) candidates comprising RSP splinter group of the socialist unity centre the forward block and rebel Marxists Coordination Committee put up 60 candidates. The Bhartiya Samanta Vadi Dal consisting of BLD remnants put up 80 candidates and RSP ML 25.

Barring a few unfortunate clashes in which a score of people were caught in some areas, polling in Bihar went off peacefully at most of the places. One police constable was

70. The Indian Nation, 15.6.1977.
73. The Searchlight, 30.7.1977.
killed while trying to protect Janata party candidates. According to unofficial sources about a dozen persons were killed in election clashes in Bihar. No candidate was injured in this election. On the eve of the Assembly elections in Bihar, the poll parties conducted raids at several places and unearthed stocks of arms and ammunition in nine districts. Official sources said that ten bombs and grenades, 17 Rifles and 57 cartridges were recovered in these raids. Fifteen persons were taken into custody. Reports from various parts of Patna, Gaya and Champaran districts 20 persons were injured in various clashes and eight of them were hospitalised.

Results

In Election, Janata party got two third majority securing 218 seats in 324 member Vidhan Sabha. The official board say that Janata party had got 214 seats. This was because 13 of its candidates could not be allotted the party symbol and they had contested as independents on other symbols. The Congress with 57 on score board had never suffered such a humiliating defeat in any assembly elections. In the dissolved house the Congress had a strength of 175 but in the new assembly it could obtain only seats. The C.P.I. which won 35 seats in 1972 could get only

75. Indian Politics Journal, August, 1977, p. 43.
76. The Indian Nation, 20.7.1977.
21 this time. The C.P.I.(M) made its appearance for the first time in the assembly as for the first time four of its candidates were elected. The Jharkhand Party (all groups combined) could get three seats. The Socialist Unity Centre and the Forward Bloc got one each and Independents got one.

Notable among the congressmen who lost the elections were nine cabinet Minister in Dr. Jaganath Mishra's cabinet. Only one of the members of Mishra Ministry had not been given tickets. This time all 12 Youth Congress leaders who had contested lost badly to their Janata rivals. The general secretary of B.P.C.C. was also among those who were defeated in this election.

Chatra Sangharsh Samiti, on the other hand, got 24 seats out of 39 contested by in on Janata Ticket.

In 22 constituencies the Congress candidates were down to third position. The margin of victory by Congress candidates in nine constituencies were less than 1000. The former local self-government Minister Karam Chandra Bhagat retained his Mander seat with a margin of just 31 votes. The Congress showed better position in West Champaran district where it barged eight of the nine seats. In the east Champaran too Congress did well and

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77. The Indian Nation, 1.8.1977.
bagged all the 11 seats it contested and two seats were captured by its ally the C.P.I.

In Sugouli constituency of Champaran district where contest was between all four national political parties. The C.P.I.(M) nominees Ramashtray Rai secured 13030 votes defeating the C.P.I. the Congress and Janata candidates.

The Janata party made significant victory in some traditional congress strong holds. Hari Nath Mishra, Speaker of the dissolved house and prominent leader of the Congress, faced his first defeat in his 32 years of political carrier. He had been successfully contesting from Bahera in Madhubani district since 19 earlier he was a member of the Constituent Assembly. However, the Congress scored some notable contests through Abdul Chefoor, Kedar Pandey and J.N. Mishra, all three former Congress Chief Ministers. The Congress and C.P.I. which fought independently and drew a blank in the Lok Sabha elections had secured 57 and 21 seats respectively. In the dissolved 318 member house original strength of the Congress and C.P.I. was 167 and 34 respectively.

Two regional parties the Jharkhand and the Soshit Dal had also secured two and one seats each respectively. But more impressive had been the performance of independents who had won

as many as 22 seats. In the Lok Sabha no independent could win. Of the 218 seats taken by the Janata Party, the constituent gains could be divided as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan Sangh</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (O)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLD</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Party</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFD</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatra Sangharsh Samiti</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>218</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total party positions was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janata-</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (I)</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.P.I.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.P.I. (M)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSP</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLD</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consermanded-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1977 elections of Bihar, people heartily supported the Janata Party specially the students came out fully in support of the Janata and worked for its victory. In 1977 the numbers of elected Brahmins dropped from 18.3 percent in general seats in 1972 to only 7.6 percent candidates or in numerical terms from 36 in 1972 to 19 in 1977. The other three castes among the forwards regained a bit, in fact, their collective share (for Bhumihar, Rajputs, and Kayasthas) went up from 36.5 percent to 40.0 percent. Only Brahmins came down because in Emergency Chief Minister of Bihar and the prime Minister too in some way was a Brahmin. Moreover in the emergency, this caste had played a very dubious role and had supported emergency excesses by coming one in favour of Jagannath Mishra.

Ministry Formation

On 24th June 1977 Karpoori Thakur became the Chief Minister of Bihar after the rift from S.N. Singha, and one S.C. Minister was from Jan Sangh group.

Among S.T. candidates one man was a cabinet minister Mr. Lalit Uron. He was Forest Minister. Among the Muslims Mr.

80. Harry Co.Blair, *Rising of Kulleas and Backward Classes in Bihar, Change In the Late 1970*.  
Zabir Hussain and Gulam Sarwar were Cabinet Ministers. No Muslim was Minister of State during Karpoori Thakur Ministry. The number of backward ministers were five and the State Ministers were two in numerical strength in the ministry of Karpoori Thakur of 1977.

The strength of Bhumihar caste men were of total seven and Rajput Ministers were four in number.

The number of Brahmin reduced very much in the Ministry. The Brahmin were only two in the Karpoori Thakur Ministry.

Earlier Development

In a series of political developments leading to the change in Bihar's leadership ten cabinet ministers, three ministers of State and one parliamentary Secretary belonging to former Jan Sangh group, Congress 'O' and BLD resigned on April 17, 1979.

Announcing this at a news conference the Finance Minister, Mr. Kailash Pati Mishra, who belonged to former Jan Sangh, said that they were resigning to form a better government. He said, that the present Government had failed to meet the

82. The Indian Nation, 18.4.1979.
aspirations of the people and that at the trial of strength the Chief Minister had cost his ground.

The Cabinet minister who tendered their resignations were Finance Minister K.P. Mishra, the Transport Minister, Shankar Prasad Tekriwal, the Rural Development Minister, Jangathbandho Adhikari, the Forest Minister Mr. Lalit Oraon, the Information Minister, Mahadeo Prasad, the Welfare Minister, Mr. Kameshwar Paswan. They all belonged to Jan Sangh group. The others who resigned were the Animal Husbandry Minister, Ramendra Singh and Thakur Prasad Singh, both belonging Congress (O) group. The Labour Minister Jamsheer Bahadur Singh of BLD too resigned. The Minister of States who resigned were Lalita Rajya Laxmi (Finance) Janardan Prasad Yadav (Industries) Siya Ram Thakur (Cooperation).

With their resignation the strength of the Cabinet Ministry was reduced to 13 and strength of Ministers of State was came down to six. The resignations shows that while entire Jan Sangh group resigned there was a division in Congress (O), the Socialist Party and the BLD. No minister belonging to the former CFD resigned.

83. Ibid.
84. Times of India, 18.4.1979.
However as late as on April 19 two ministers of former CFD group resigned namely Mohan Ram and Sumitra Devi, who tendered their resignation shortly before the crucial meeting at the Janata legislature party at the instance of Deputy Prime Minister, Jagjiwan Ram. In this meeting Thakur lost the vote of confidence at this special meeting of Janata legislature party by 135 votes to 105.

Announcing the results after a marathon meeting lasting about five hours the returning officer Mr. Samar Guha, M.P. said that out of 243 votes polled 240 were valid, one invalid, one blank and one under dispute. Of the valid votes 135 were against, 105 for Mr. Thakur motion. Subsequently Karpoori Thakur submitted his resignation to the Acting Governor K.B.N. Singh.

**Ram Sundar Das Ministry**

Bihar Chief Minister Karpoori Thakur was replaced by Ram Sunder Das, 55 years old former Socialist who was unanimously elected as the leader of the Bihar Janata Party at its meeting in Patna on April 21, 1979. Mr. Das had the honour of being the second Harijan to become the Chief Minister of Bihar,

86. The Indian Nation, 20.4.1979.
87. The Indian Nation, 22.4.1979.
the first being Bhola Paswan Shastri, who had headed the coalition government in Bihar for sometime. There was nothing surprising in the election of Mr. Das but what surprised political observers was that the number of his supporters swelled sharply over night after his name was formally announced by the leaders of pro-change group as their nominee. The record proved that 33 members had left Thakur's group to support Das. All Harijans and Adivasi members came out in support of Das. In all 168 Janata members, 144 of the assembly and 24 of the council were present at the meeting on April 21 where in the trial of strength held on April 19, only 135 members had voted against Thakur.

The Choice of Ram Sunder Das as leader of the party did not come as surprise. Das's name had been mentioned as an alternative to Thakur for the post for the last few months. In fact Das was the only person answering all the qualifications among the dissidents.

Known to be a trusted lieutenant of Ramanand Tiwary and Basawan Singh, veteran socialist leaders, he was also known to be very close to Satyendra Narain Singh, the State Janata Party Chief. Singh had been openly canvassing for Das after it

became known that no M.P. would be allowed to contest for leadership.

Mr. Das had the full backing of the Congress (O) and Socialist constituents of the party. It was the Jan Sangh constituent which was not too enthusiastic about his candidature but the split between the BLD and the Jan Sangh left no other choice to the Jan Sangh group but to accept Das as a leader. Mr. Das was also the only candidate for whom a large number of Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims were willing to join with dissidents. Being a close confident of S.N. Singh a large number of Rajput members (their number being 49 in all) of all party groups supported his candidature. They wanted to avenge the defeat of S.N. Singh inflicted by Karpoori Thakur in the June 1977 party election for Chief Ministership.

New Cabinet

With the swearing in of six cabinet ministers the first phase of expansion of the new ministry headed by Mr. Das was completed on April 30. These new ministers were Muneshwar Prasad Singh, Lalit Oraon, Tej Narain Yadav, Deo Narain Yadav, Anirudh Prasad and Md. Sayeed. Muneshwar Singh belonged to

92. The Searchlight, 22.4.1977.
93. The Indian Nation, 1.5.1979.
94. The Indian Nation, 1.5.1979.
Socialist party, Oraon to the Jan Sangh, Tej Narain Yadav to the RLD, Deo Narain Yadav to the CFD, Anirudh Prasad to Congress (O) and Sayeed to the non-aligned group. Irrigation and Electricity was allotted to Muneshwar Prasad, Agriculture to Deo Narain Yadav, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries to Tej Narain Yadav, P.H.E.D. to Anirudh Prasad, Tourism and Civil aviation to Sayeed. Lalit Oraon and Kailash Pati Mishra retained the portfolios they held under the Karpoori Thakur government.

Mr. Das kept all other departments to himself and after 15 days Mr. Das again announced the expansion of his Cabinet. With the historic split of Janata party and formation of the Lok Dal in mid 1979, the Ram Sunder Das Ministry was saved by the support of the Congress I.

The Congress I after its victory in Lok Sabha elections of January 1980 dismissed all the state governments it had for and dissolved the legislative assemblies to come under Congress(I) axe.

And in May 1980 election was held and Congress got an absolute majority winning 167 of the 321 seats and new ministry under Jagannath Mishra was formed.
Summing up

The Sixth Lok Sabha elections in India and the subsequent State Assembly elections were historic and unique as they both heralded a political upheaval in the country. They are both without a parallel and are undoubtedly a watershed in India's post-independence history. These elections closed down a major chapter and ended an era of uncertainty in India in general and in the politics of Bihar in particular. The results of these elections not only brought to a dramatic end the 21 months of the emergency, 11 years of Mrs. Gandhi's rule and three decades of the Congress hegemony at the centre, but also brought into existence a viable party which could act as an alternative to the Congress both at the centre as well as the states.

No democracy could have failed to admire the way in which the Janata Party leaders came together and functioned from the day they were released from the jails until the Assembly election. Having been cut off from the rest of the world for nearly two years, they had no organization with which to face the electorate and fight the elections, but they asked for our favours from anyone and worked with a singleness of purpose seldom witnessed in politics. The Congress, on the other hand, made a poor show of its ability to conduct a clean campaign
based on principles and democratic norms. Its constant vitu­perations and denunciatory statement against the Janata Party and its leaders failed to carry conviction with the people.

However, the Congress performance in the Bihar Assembly elections, began to show the trend of people's disenchantment with the performance of the Janata Party at the Centre. The not too bad performance of the Congress at the Assembly elections holds out this fact. The Janata Party's performance in the Cabinet making and ramming through some unpopular measures like reservation policy brought dispopularity to Karpoori Thakur who was within a short time, removed from Chief Ministership. He was replaced by Ram Sunder Das, a Harijan leader who was backed by the forwards, Scheduled castes, Scheduled Tribes and Muslims. This shows the unpopularity gained by Thakur due to his policy of reservation in government jobs for backwards. The next chapter proposes to examine the working and achievements of the Janata party during its 28-month rule in Bihar.