CHAPTER 5

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO PARTY POLITICS IN MADHYA PRADESH.

The state of Madhya Pradesh was carved out on November 1, 1956, on the basis of recommendations made by the "States Re-organisation Committee". Consequently, the erstwhile princely states of Madhya Bharat, Rewa, Chattisgarh, Bhopal, and Hindi-speaking areas of Mahakoshal (Central Provinces) were merged together to create the state of Madhya Pradesh. But this merger was only superficial in nature and could provide only linguistic homogeneity to the state. "The Madhya Bharat Union, for instance, had a long and complicated history of political rivalries, party dissidence and unstable governments. A tradition of political rivalry in Madhya Bharat—at the level of ruling houses as well as that of Congress leadership—came as a disturbing legacy for the new State of Madhya Pradesh. Diversity of units so merged, mutual distrust and fear of domination of one region by the other in administration and services, obstructed a naturally expected feeling of reciprocity; and though a political union was carved out, it did not lead to the identities of a political community" (Purohit, 1968:303). Most of the states, at the time of merger were totally at different stages of economic, social and political development. While criticizing the
government's decision, E.P.W. da Costa, (1966), like many others, wrote:

Madhya Pradesh was born in error: it was a sprawling incoherent and ineffective administrative unit sought to be made coherent by the magic touch of language .... The truth is that the States Reorganisation Commission was unable to face squarely the administrative complexity of far-flung territories in very different degrees of administrative control. The commission was wholly preoccupied with political pressures, and Madhya Pradesh was carved out of Central India, Madhya Bharat and Orissa to produce a surface cohesion, both historically and politically, without substance.

In the similar way, W. Wilcox (a pioneer on the study of Madhya Pradesh) asserted:

Madhya Pradesh was formed [by the central government] because there seemed to be nothing else to do with its constituent parts ... [which] ... infact possessed almost no political affinity (Wilcox, 1968:131-132).

In a nutshell, mutual distrust, fear of domination of one region by the other in different sectors of economy and polity, areal differentiation in political consciousness (in terms of electoral participation rate) from one region to the other, were some of the characteristics of the state at the time of its creation. The regional and sub-regional identities (like Gwalior and Indore division in the Madhya
Bharat) which were the most important cleavages at the time of the creation of states are not only still alive but are also playing a conspicuous role in the state's electoral politics.

Writing on the point why Madhya Pradesh, even after retaining large scale factional elements within its socio-economic-political system, is still an integrated political-administrative entity, Wilcox, as quoted by Mitra (1990:175) wrote: mainly two factors, namely political organizations and the deep-rooted links of political forces having all-India character (e.g. the Congress) have provided such integration. He further wrote that though the political forces of mature character are able to provide the state a stable character but the inherent political characteristics of the state (political factionalism, fluid coalitions, faction-ridden ruling party system, continuous struggle for power between village headman and ex-intermediaries) had provided several constraints to the healthy building of party structure in the state.

On the basis of administrative and political history, Madhya Pradesh is generally divided into four major regions: Madhya Bharat, Mahakoshal, Chattisgarh, and Vindhya Pradesh. (Fig. 5.1) In the process of evolution, each region has developed its unique characteristics.

MADHYA BHARAT

The western and north-western part of Madhya Pradesh is known as "Madhya Bharat". The region has an area
of 47,000 square miles, of which 3/4th comes under the plateau of "Malwa". Before independence, the region was composed of 25 independent states, ruled by feudal lords and princes. Most of the area was under the control of two Maratha families - the Scindias and the Holkars. The former had its pre-eminence in the northern parts of the state with its "center of power" around the Gwalior city and the latter one representing the south, with its power-generating growth pole in Indore. There was no co-ordination between these two autocratic families. However, things had changed around 1920's when the Holkar's family had thought of sharing hands with the Scindias, against the increasing paramountcy of the British.

The Madhya Bharat has a long historical background of different palatinates. First, it was a part of the Mauryas, the Guptas, the Harsha and later came under the control of the Rajputs. After Rajputanas, came the great Mughals and it became their Suba 1. But after the death of Aurganzeb, the empire of Mughals started disintegrating and a power-vacuum was created which was later on filled up by the emerging Marathas (under the leadership of Balaji Vishwanath). Around 1780's, the Malwa region came under the control of Baji Rao (son of Balaji Vishwanath) and it was during that period, that the Maratha families of the region, Scindias and Holkars, came into their aura popularis. Moreover, when the area of Malwa consolidated further, it

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1. During the Mugal empire, a province was called "suba". Each suba was headed by a nobel called "subadar", who held military and civil powers.
came under the control of Balaji Baji Rao (son of Baji Rao). In the later periods, with the defeat of Marathas in the Third battle of Panipat, of Scindias at Assaye, and of Marathas in Third Anglo-Maratha War (in 1817); both the Maratha families, Scindias and Holkars, accepted the British supremacy and became subsidiary allies of the company.

After the Third-Anglo-Maratha War, Sir John Malcolm came to settle territorial disputes of the region and to redraw the map of Malwa. Under his settlement: "The two Maratha states of Gwalior and Indore were enclosed within carefully demarcated limits. Fifteen Rajputs and a few Muslim States which had been under the suzerainty of either Gwalior or Indore were made independent of them and brought under British protection" (Menon, 1956:224).

The settlement made by Malcolm "established three categories of semi-sovereign rulers: those who were subordinate to no other prince (such as Gwalior, Char, and Dewas); those Rajputs who claimed independence from Maratha courts (the "mediatised states"); and the smaller Rajput landlords who were given "guaranteed estates" with some governmental powers in local affairs" (Wilcox, 1968:132).

The purpose of this settlement, in fact, was nothing else but to reduce the strength of the Maratha family. The settlement also established a semi-feudal order between the cultivators and the intermediary agents of the state. As in most parts of the Madhya Bharat "Jagirdari" system—a system in which land revenue from a territory was
collected by a chief known as "Jagirdar"—was in operation. In a series of acts "beginning as early as 1948, the various governments in the region passed legislation eliminating or restricting the power of the rural intermediaries, but with compensation for revenue and rights lost. However, the thakurs and jagirdars remain an important force in regional politics" (Wilcox, 1968:132), and still have their command over the masses.

In the region of Madhya Bharat, contrasts are much sharper between the urban and the rural areas, than between the urban areas. "It need only be said here that rural politics tend to be more particularistic than urban politics, and that caste membership, the tenure system, and kin groups play a crucial role in the countryside" (Wilcox, 1968:133).

Wilcox (1968:134-135) noted five unique factors of political importance characterizing public life in the Madhya Bharat region: (1) A tribal bloc in the south which tends to maintain in office experienced political leadership (Non-tribal moneylenders also play an important brokering role); (2) A continuous struggle between village headmen and ex-intermediaries for local power, and a struggle between former ruling houses for status and power; (3) A modern elite rivalry for business and political power between Indore and Gwalior elites; (4) A powerful and well-financed trade union movement in Indore; and (5) a large Jain
commercial class with historic, commercial, and religious ties to Gujarat and with a rivalry for regional dominance with a Brahmin-dominated coalition.

CHATTISGARH AND MAHAKOSHAL

Chattisgarh, of which Bastar comprises largest area, is the eastern-most part of the state. Due to the availability of deposits of rich mineral resources "which had been discovered throughout the Chattisgarh region and for obvious political reasons, the government of India was unwilling to see it split off solely as a princely union. An equally important consideration was the need of Orissa to incorporate the hill states in its political life. In a somewhat devious fashion, the Indian government utilized the state "praja mandals" and capitalized on the inroads being made by Communists in the region to divide the states between the Central Provinces, soon to become Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa" (Wilcox, 1968:140).

The Mahakoshal area of the state was under the direct rule of the British with its headquarter in Nagpur. Being inhabitants of formerly British-administered territory of the Central Provinces and Berar, the people of the region were politically more aware because the region had witnessed the implementation of various Government of India Acts like those of 1909, 1919, and 1935. This had given to the people of the region some sort of political consciousness (through elected legislatures and semi-responsible governments) which was not available to the people living in the erstwhile
princely states of Madhya Bharat, Chattisgarh, and Vindhya Pradesh. By and large, the impact of "political articulation seen in Mahakoshal region, where the Indian National Congress had established its roots, presented a contrast with the lack of political awareness in princely States, where political parties were not allowed to function. Such a divergent legacy had its impact on the politics of the newly constituted state" (Purohit, 1968:303).

"The unique characteristics of Mahakoshal are (1) its numerical dominance compared to three other heterogeneous units, (2) the importance of the tribal population and leaders in Chattisgarh region, (3) the development of heavy industries, and (4) the existence of a trained cadre of party workers. While caste and tribal loyalties are still important, this region has an experienced political elite, and the style of life of rice/paddy cultivators, tied to regional markets as they are, is quite different from that of subsistence farmers in Madhya Bharat. Moreover, the potentials of the region are such as to encourage growth and urbanization, thereby further emphasizing the dominance of Mahakoshal in the life of the state" (Wilcox, 1968:141).

VINDHYA PRADESH

The region which has derived its name from the Vindhya range (a dividing range between the state of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh), is in the north and northwestern parts of Madhya Pradesh. It has an area of 24,600
square miles. The nature and extent of dynastic conflicts in the region are very much like those of Madhya Bharat region. Whereas, in the latter one, the conflict was between the two Maratha families, in the Vindhya Pradesh it was between two Rajput castes, Baghelas, and Bundelas, living respectively in Baghelkhand and Bundelkhand.

This is one of the backward-most regions of Central India, both economically and politically and this is particularly so in the countryside. Consequently, political awareness among the people of this region is still very low.

In order to solve the problems of Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand, they were placed under the control of Maharaja of Rewa (as Rajpramukh) and later given the status of separate assemblies. But when the problem became worse than before, the region was directed under the authoritiship of the Indian Civil Servant (ICS) Commissioner and finally under the direct central government control by dividing Vindhya Pradesh into united provinces and central provinces.

In the absence of urban forms of political association, the politics of Vindhya Pradesh is closely tied to agriculture and traditional and tribal orders. The political life of "the region seems to be strongly influenced mainly by three factors: (1) tribal and caste loyalties, (2) the continuing strength and mutual hostilities of jagirdars, mostly Rajputs, and (3) the continuing power and rivalry of princes" (Wilcox, 1968:139).
Political Parties

The political parties in Madhya Pradesh can be categorised into three groups: the centrist parties such as the Congress, which is the oldest and the largest party; the rightist parties such as the Bharatiya Janata Party; and the leftist parties such as Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Congress party

The Congress, which is the most powerful party in the state, has been active ever since its creation in 1885. It functioned even when present day Madhya Pradesh was divided into a number of sovereign states. With the re-organisation of the state, however, different pradesh congress committees functioning in Madhya Bharat including Bhopal, Vindhya Pradesh, Mahakoshal and Chattisgarh separately, were re-organised and merged into one. Until the late 1980s, the state party system exhibits the characteristics of one-party system, in which struggle for power was not between position and opposition parties, but between the faction groups of "party of consensus". As one wrote: "The political life of state is dominated by the Congress party in its various factional avatars" (Wilcox, 1968:141).

The Congress in Madhya Pradesh has almost always remained faction-ridden and regional loyalties play a major role in the formation of these factions. Starting with a
conflict in mid-1960s between D.P. Mishra and Pradesh Congress Committee Chief, M.C. Deshlahera, and travelling through late 1960s between Mishra and G.N. Singh, in early 1970s between Shukla brothers and Arjun Singh, factionalism has become a permanent feature of the Congress polity. This phenomenon has not only resulted in consistent decay of the Congress organization and its mass appeal but has also helped in the growth of some influential parties like the BJP.

Congress factionalism reached its climax in November 1966, when influential leaders of Madhya Bharat and Chattisgarh stood openly against the leadership of D.P. Mishra. This was followed by the emergence of four regional power groups in late 1960s, with S.C. Shukla dominating the Chattisgarh region. D.P. Mishra the Sagar-Jabalpur, G.N. Singh the Vindhya Pradesh and Deshlahera the Madhya Bharat region. During the 1980s the regional leadership of the Chattisgarh region was under the control of S.C. Shukla, whereas Arjun Singh and Madhavrao Scindia dominated the regional politics of Madhya Bharat and Gwalior divisions respectively.

**Swantantra Party**

Emphasizing the freedom of the individual, the importance of private enterprise, the ancient concept of "dharma", and the principle of trusteeship, in the Gandhian sense, the Swantantra (Freedom) Party emerged on the
national political scene in August, 1959. However, the party in the state of Madhya Pradesh could never make much headway.

Bharatiya Janata Party

Bharatiya Janata Party is the second biggest party in Madhya Pradesh and the chief rival of the Congress for political power. It was established in the state in 1952 in the form of Bharatiya Jana Sangh, just a month before the commencement of the first general election. In contrast to the Congress, which is loosing ground in the state, Bharatiya Jana Sangh (later as B.J.P.) has registered an upward trend.

When the Bharatiya Jana Sangh was established in Madhya Pradesh, it drew heavily on the membership and the leadership of the R.S.S.. The socio-political heritage of the state, which consists of large areas which were under the rule of native princes, made a fertile area for the growth of the party having a clear-cut ideology and an all-India organization such as Jana Sangh. The party also registered a quick rise in the state due to disciplined cadre and partly at the expense of Hindu Mahasabha and Swantantra Party. Once restricted to the erstwhile princely states, the party in late 1980s has come out with a wider spectrum both in terms of mass appeal and vote base.
Janata Party

The Janata Party came into existence on the eve of the 1977 general election. Though it came to power with an absolute majority, but collapsed very soon due to internal conflicts. Owing to the hasty and baseless configuration of different political ideologies, political leadership in the state changed thrice within a period of less than three years of Janata rule. The party has now almost a negligible presence in the state.

Communist Parties

Though the state from its very beginning has a number of leftist parties, but they could never make appreciable presence. Before the 1977 general election, the state had leftist parties like Socialist Party, Samyukta Socialist Party, Praja Socialist Party, Praja Socialist Party, but since then Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India (Marxist) are trying their best to make a dent in the Congress and the BJP vote banks.

Electoral Politics: Performance of Congress and BJP

The electoral performance of political parties in the state of Madhya Pradesh is given in Table 5.1. It is quite evident from the data that the contest for political power in the state is mainly restricted to two political parties, i.e. the Congress and the BJP. Barring 1962 and 1977 assembly elections, both the political parties (the Congress and the BJP) have jointly won more than 75 per cent of the state's total seats (Table 5.2).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>250</td>
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<td>174</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.J.P.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>222</td>
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<td>Janata Party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>ABRRP*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL SEATS</strong></td>
<td>232</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>320</td>
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* Akhil Bharatiya Ram Rajya Parishad.

Congress party

The political-electoral history of the state of Madhya Pradesh has for long been dominated by the Congress party (Table 5.1). The electoral results clearly show that in the state, the Congress party has registered electoral victories at the maximum and ruled the state most.
Table 5.2: Per cent Seats won by the Congress and the BJP jointly in state assembly elections of Madhya Pradesh: 1952-1993.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Total Seats</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The graphical display of the Congress party's per cent vote and seats won from 1952 to 1990 assembly elections clearly demonstrated that the party, excepting 1977 and 1990 assembly elections, has always been benefitted from the huge positive electoral bias. In the first assembly election held after the creation of the state in 1957, the party had polled 49.8 per cent vote, however, the party was able to win 80.55 per cent (232) seats of the total 288 seats. In the 1962 assembly election, the party received a setback both in terms of percentage of votes and seats won. The party with 38.5 per cent vote could capture only 49.30 per cent (142) seats. The downfall in the party's performance was ascribed by political analysts on two points: First and the most important was the internal party conflicts and as
many as 90 cases of internal party sabotages were registered, and second was the emerging right wing main opposition party,—Bharatiya Jana Sangh. But by winning 40.7 per cent vote and 56.42 per cent (167) seats, the party improved its tally under the able leadership of D.P. Mishra. In 1972 election, the party further strengthened its performance by polling 47.9 per cent vote and winning 74.32 per cent (220) seats. In 1977 election, due to the Janata wave, the Congress lost the seat of power and could win only 26.25 per cent (84) seats, however, its vote share was 35.9 per cent. In 1980, and 1985 assembly elections, the party by polling more than 45 per cent vote had won more than 75 per cent (246 and 250) seats in both the elections. In the 1990 assembly election, due to the all-around rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Congress party had registered its most dreadful defeat in the state's electoral history and could win only 17.78 per cent (55) seats (Fig. 5.2).

Bharatiya Janata Party

Bharatiya Janata Party is the only political party of Madhya Pradesh whom vote share has consistently been on the rise since the first assembly election.

In the first assembly election held in 1957, after the creation of the state, the party polled 9.8 per cent vote and won 10 seats. In the 1962 election, the party was able nearly to double its vote (16.7 per cent) and could win 41 seats. The 1967 assembly election came as a turning point
Vote-Seat Relationship in respect of Congress
1952 - 1990

Fig. 5.2
Vote-Seat Relationship in respect of B.J.P.
1957 - 1990

Fig. 5.3
in the party's history, when the party increased its popular vote share up to 28.3 per cent and won 78 seats. This was due to the close-knit alliance with Rajmata of Gwalior and other princes in the state, particularly of the Madhya Bharat region. However, in 1972 election, the party received a set back and could capture only 48 seats. The vote share of the party (28.7 per cent) in this election was though marginally higher than the preceding election of 1967. This was mainly due to the failure of Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (SVD) government of which Bharatiya Jana Sangh was a part. In 1977 the party did not participate in the electoral process independently and was a part of Janata Party. In the next two assembly elections of 1980 and 1985 though the vote percentage in favour of the party increased further but in terms of seats won it lagged behind. The 1990 assembly election came as a major breakthrough in the political life of the party. In this election, the party made deep inroads into the Congress party's electoral territories. The party increased its vote share from 32.63 per cent in 1985 to 46.56 per cent in 1990 (Fig.5.3). As many as 222 candidates belonging to the party were elected to assembly house.