

CHAPTER - IIASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN MAHARASHTRAI. The Janata Party Government at the Centre :-

After the Vith Lok Sabha elections, the Janata Party came to power having secured 302 seats out of 542 total seats and its President Morarji Desai was elected as the Leader of the Janata Parliamentary Party by consensus. He became Prime Minister while other aspirants of the post of Prime Minister Mr. Charan Singh and Mr. Jagjivan Ram took charge of Home and Defence portfolios respectively. Soon the newly formed Janata Party Government decided to dissolve 9 state assemblies where the Congress Party was badly defeated. At the same time Mr. Y.B. Chavan was elected as the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party and the leader of the opposition as well, because the Congress was the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha. This was a new role for him under the changed circumstances in which he ascended as the top leader of Congress in the face of Mrs. Gandhi's defeat in the Lok Sabha elections. Using his personal influence Mr. Y.B. Chavan, saved the Maharashtra assembly under Congress Government though the assembly was nearing the completion of its term and the Congress party was defeated in the elections.

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After assuming the leadership of the Congress Parliamentary party Y.B.Chavan decided to overthrow his arch rival S.B.Chavan from his post. Y.B.Chavan was supported by his two followers - Vasant Naik and Vasant Dada Patil. Vasant Dada Patil was unceremoniously removed from ministry by S.B.Chavan during emergency.

2. Vasant Dada becomes Chief Minister :- Y.B.Chavan's strategy to overthrow S.B.Chavan was part of the anxiousness, as there was a possibility of that levers of power in Maharashtra might be stripped off their effective control to the Brahmin-led Janata Party. The Y.B. Chavan group became active to check this rising tide of the Janata Party in Maharashtra. In the meanwhile several workers at the grass-root level were crossing over to the Janata. To face the situation Y.B.Chavan group began to mobilize support against S.B. Chavan who was also unpopular among the rank and file of the party. Vasant Dada on the other hand was a man of organization and his skill was most needed for the party. The Sargar-lothy too was behind its mentor Vasant Dada <sup>2</sup>. Thus a strategy was manoevered to oust B.B. Chavan through "Signature Campaign" and "Dinner Diplomacy". Vasant Dada who had renounced politics a year ago, climbed down to fight out the political battle with

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S.B.Chavan. He was backed by many important leaders like V.P. Naik, Madhukar Rao Chowdhary, Shivaji Rao Giridhar Patil, Shankar Rao Mohite Patil etc. and Sharad Pawar etc.<sup>3</sup>.

The Sugar factories federation was openly demanding S.B. Chavan's resignation.<sup>4</sup> But S.B.Chavan was reluctant to resign as he thought that he was still enjoying confidence of the MLAs as was evident from his statement "he would leave in the event as majority of the MLAs want him to go"<sup>5</sup>. He was adamant in his stand "not to resign under pressure". Though there were rumours that 80 Congress MLAs would leave the party.<sup>6</sup> Mr. R.A.Patil as arch rival of Vasant Dada, was behind Mr.S.B.Chavan<sup>7</sup>.

The S.B. Chavan ouster controversy was getting hot; the central high command of the party sent Mr. Hare Krishna Shastri as the observer to sort out the problems. He reported that out of 250 MLAs, 150 MLAs want S.B.Chavan to go and 87 favour him<sup>8</sup>. Mr. S.B.Chavan charged that Hare Krishna's report was biased. But soon he made his mind to step down, when the party High Command sent another Observer C.Subramaniam<sup>9</sup>. He planned to out manoeuvre the rival faction's move through shifting preconditions. First, he emphasized that he would resign, provided next C.M. should be from Marathwada. Later he successfully divided Y.B.Chavan's

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supporters and persuaded Mr. Yashwant Rao Mohite to contest the Congress legislative party leadership's election - a new precondition by S.B.Chavan. He made a dent in the Y.B. Chavan's group but was not shrewd enough to effect it successfully. Cleverly Vasant Dada rose upto the challenge and defeated Mr. Y. Mohite in the election getting 189 votes. Y. Mohite could get 88 votes.<sup>10</sup> Thus Vasant Dada became the Chief Minister in an odd political atmosphere with so many problems in the store. One important problem was the building up of the party organization which was cracking up after the Lok Sabha elections and the control over the party was becoming loose.

3. The Congress Split :- After the dismissal from the post of Chief Minister without any substantial reason, S.B.Chavan was a bit frustrated. He began to maintain links with the Janata leaders who were already inviting him to join the Janata party. In between Mr. R.A. Patil joined the CFD" (which later merged with the Janata Party on 1st May 1977). Soon S.B.Chavan and his supporters, Vikhe Patil, Mr. Prabhugaskar, Mr. P.K. Samant etc. resigned from the congress and formed a new party known as (Maharashtra Samiwadi Congress Paksha) Maharashtra Socialist Congress Party. 2 MPs and 11 MLAs joined the new party.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time Mrs. Gandhi who after her defeat in the Lok Sabha elections was quiet and aloof; began to assert her self through party forum. It irked the senior party leaders like Y.B.Chavan, B.Reddy, Swaran Singh, T.A.Pai etc. But the second rank leaders in the party rallied around her. Leaders like Mr.A.R.Antulay, V.P. Naik, Stephen, Sitaram Kesri, Vasant Sathe etc. supported her. Similarly a large number of congress party workers wanted her to come back to active politics - as this was the most opportune move for all those leaders in their scheme of things.

In the highest echelons of leadership there emerged growing unrestness as they perceived a threat to their dominance especially Y.B.Chavan was the most unhappy man over Mrs. Gandhi's come back. It was evident that, after the Lok Sabha elections he was on the rise in the party circles especially because of his large following in Maharashtra, the like of which no other leader in the Congress enjoyed. All this was well and good in absence of Mrs. Gandhi in active politics soon after the General elections. Secondly Y.B.Chavan was ambitious leader who was trying to consolidate his position in the party at the centre. But his position was at stake in the event Mrs. Gandhi entered politics. She could not have allowed him to consolidate. Thus what Y.B.Chavan was fearing was a threat to his political ambitions. Naturally in the game of power, he was opposing

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Mrs. Gandhi tooth and knail. He was supported by leaders like Brahmmanand Reddy, Karan Singh, T.A. Pai etc. Some of them were influenced by the anti-emergency and anti-Mrs. Gandhi propaganda; while some were better placed under Mr. Y.B.Chavan's leadership. One could see that in the wake of the Congress defeat; and the propaganda from almost all the sections of media, obliged the congress leaders. They decided to work on democratic lines and not to follow Mrs. Gandhi's authoritarian style of functioning. According to the changed circumstances, the party resorted to "collective leadership" and "internal democracy". Thus all the sections in the party were sharing in the "decision making" process. Similarly the control of Y.B.Chavan and B.Reddy etc. over the party was not as complete or commanding as it was under Mrs. Gandhi's leadership. The second rank leaders were happy with the new power-structure in the party. So some leaders like A.K.Antony, T.A.Pai, Unnikrishnan, Priya Ranjan Das Munshi etc. vehemently opposed Mrs. Gandhi.

At the same time Mrs. Gandhi was determined to reassert her supremacy. During the Janata regime, Mrs. Gandhi was under heavy criticism personally and the situation further worsened with the working of Shah Commission appointed to enquire into the excesses and atrocities committed and the misuse of power by Mrs. Gandhi during the emergency rule. Mrs. Gandhi was very perturbed and was badly in need of party platform to face the

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the charges against her and her son. The Congress party was not willing to support her and her son. Hence, Mrs. Gandhi decided to effect second split in the Congress in 1978. The anti-Indira Group was firmly in control of the party,

The situation further deteriorated, when the pro-Indira faction served the much debated requisition-notice duly signed by 411 out of 667 members of the AICC to summon the A.I.C.C. Convention.<sup>13</sup> They wanted to replace Brahmmanand Reddy by Mrs. Gandhi as the president of the party. More or less, it was a warning to split the party. Many leaders like Vasant Dada Patil, V.P. Naik etc. were mediating to avoid split in the party. But the battle-lines were drawn and the party split was engineered - first M. S. Gandhi resigned from the congress working committee on 18th December, 1977;<sup>14</sup> followed by the collective resignations of 7 CWC members viz: (i) Mr. Kamalapati Tripathi (ii) Sayed Mir Qasim (iii) P.V. Narsimharao (iv) Virendra Rao (v) Būta Singh (vii) A.P. Sharma (vii) Mrs. M. Chandra Shekhar.<sup>15</sup>

The Pro-Indira leaders convened the controversial national convention at New Delhi on 1st January 1978. The C.W.C. in a resolution appealed its members to boycott the political convention. So did the M.P.C.C. leaders. Only 149 AICC members out of a total 664, attended the Pro-Indira Congress party's political convention. Mrs. Gandhi was elected the President of the party. From Maharashtra leaders like

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A.R. Antulay, V.Sathe, N.M.Tirpude etc. actively worked for the new party's convention which was called as the Congress (I). Commenting over the split Mr. Y.B.Chavan in an interview, blamed Mrs.Gandhi for the party split. He remarked we believed in collective leadership and internal democracy while Mrs. Gandhi did not. He clarified that it was because of Mrs.Candhi that we changed three congress presidents within six months. First she opposed Mr.D.K. Barooah, then Mr. Swaran Singh and later the new president Mr. Brahmanand Reddy; though all were appointed as presidents with her support.

Formally the new break away congress party under Mrs. Gandhi's leadership was formed on 1st January 1978. The party split did not affect the Vasant Dada Government as no major leader left the party N.K. Tirpude, R.Adik, A.R.Antulay and Premilabai Chavan were prominent among them. But the local leaders and workers were crossing over to the newly formed congress (I). In Nagpur, 15 Corporators out of 16 joined the Congress (I). The defection trend was on its peak especially among the small leaders and leaders from Vidarbha and Marathwada like Mr. Bhandare (MP) Mr. Vaishampayan, Mr. Babu Rao Kale, Bhau Rao Gavande, Babu Rao Aarolkar joined the Congress (I).<sup>17</sup>

4. Consolidation of the Janata Party :- The Congress party split enhanced the morale of State Janata Party leaders. The party was growing stronger. In a meeting dated



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26th June, 1977, the Janata Party executive appealed its allies, the P.W.P. the R.P.I factions to merge with the Janata 18. Similarly the party stressed need for the building up of party organization. The party recruited 3,50,000 primary members throughout the State. Ad-hoc committees were formed in all the districts. Further 75 Tahsil-level ad-hoc committees were formed.<sup>19</sup> The party high-command reorganised the Maharashtra unit in the face of coming assembly polls in the State and appointed Mr. S.M.Joshi as its President and the other office-bearers as follows : Vice-President Mr. Motiram Lahane, Mr. R.A.Patil, Gen. Secretaries, Mr. Pannalal Surana, D.Y. Patil, Vasant Bhagwat, Prabhakar Gupte and Prabhu Bhai Sanghvi. Treasurer Vinod Gupta<sup>20</sup>.

The State unit had organised the party in all the social strate of society viz. (1) Labour Sub-Committee (2) Youth Sub-Committee (3) Farmers Sub-Committee (4) Women Sub-Committee and (5) Publicity Sub-Committee.<sup>21</sup>

With the help of the party machinery six regional and its 200 legislative constituencies, political conferences were held to mobilize mass-support.<sup>22</sup> The Janata rank and file were swelling as more and more congressmen were joining the party. Thus Janata party was well set from organisational point of view. The leaders were confident to sweep the polls as was evident that frequently the state Janata leaders were demanding the Central Government to dissolve the Vasant Dada Government. But the Central Janata leaders did not need the state-unit.

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The tenure of the assembly was nearing its completion. As a measure of preparedness, the Janata party formed a 17 members election committee was formed to devise the election strategy and execute it. It was essentially a supreme Body dealing with all affairs regarding elections. It was consisting of (1) S.M. Joshi - to lead the committee (2) Sonu Singh Patil (3) B.A.Desai (4) Moti Ram Lahane (5) Bapu Saheb Kaldate (6) Sambhaji Rao Kak~~ke~~ (7) Nihal Ahmed (8) Uttam Ram Patil (9) Jagannath Rao Joshi (10) R.A.Patil (11) Babu Rao Bharaskar (12) Hari Bhau Mahule etc. 23.

At the Khandala, the Janata party and its allies, the P.W.P. the CP(I) M, the RPI (K) RPI (Khobragade) etc. decided to fight unitedly, the forthcoming assembly elections with a common objective to defeat the congress. At the meeting, it was decided that the Janata would leave 77 seats to the P.W.P. The consensus was also reached over the joint programme in the same meeting. 24.

With the Congress split and joining of leaders like R.A.Patil and D.S.Desai, the Janata leaders' morale rose so high that they reconsidered party's policy vis-vis- its allies, especially the P.W.P - the major ally to which it was decided to give 77 seats. S.M. Joshi was firm to allot 77 seats to the P.W.P., but he was opposed by almost the entire executive .<sup>25</sup> Mohan Dharis and Somu Singh Patil demanded in the meeting that reconsideration of the

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party's policy about seat adjustment be made.<sup>26</sup> Finally, the State Executive decided to leave at the most 100 seats to friendly partners including the P.W.P. and the party's should contest 189 seats on its own.<sup>27</sup>

Reacting sharply, the P.W.P. ruled out seat adjustment with the Janata party and unilaterally declared names of the 77 candidates over which the P.W.P. staked its claims and closed once for all the doors of any understanding with the Janata party.<sup>28</sup> The Janata party fielded 208 candidates leaving 12 seats to the CP(I) M 25 to the RPI (Khobragade); 39 to P.W.P. 9 to RPI (Kamble) 29 to Maharashtra Socialist Congress, 6 to the Nagpur Mahavidarbha Andolan Samiti; 2 to the All India Muslim League and 2 independents.<sup>29</sup>

The Janata list included 16 Muslims and 8 women. Similarly the Janata allotted tickets to 16 sitting MLAs. The Congress (R) fielded 254 candidates. Initially the Congress (R) faced some difficulty in seat adjustments with RPI (Gawai) but later, Dada overcame and reached agreement with the C.P.I, I.U.M.L. etc.<sup>30</sup>

The newly formed Congress (I) in the state was the least organized of all the parties. Still a constant influx of workers was the morale boosting strength of the its leadership. The influx to Congress (I) was very common throughout the State barring some parts of Western Maharashtra. The Congress (I) was contesting 221 seats and entered into an alliance with

small parties like the Forward Block under Mr. Jambuwant Rao Dhote 20 seats, Dalit Panthers (Arun Kamble) 13 seats, Dalit Panthers (Namdeo Dhasal) 1 seat, RPI (Shanshyam Talwalkar) 6 seats.

Among the Congress candidates were 6 women, 10 Muslims  
 SC-36, ST-22, OBC-46.<sup>31</sup>

Any cursory glance at the list of all the party candidates would show that the Congress (I) was pre-dominantly a party of weaker sections seeking to forge alliance of weaker sections of the society. The Congress (I) alliance also was with the parties representing the weaker sections on the backward communities. The Janata and Congress (R) were essentially the caste alliances dominated by the traditional caste leaders or the ruling elite hailing from the Western Maharashtra.

5. Issues and Background of Election :- This assembly election was peculiar one as there was a new force in the form the Janata Party. Which after the victory in the sixth Lok Sabha elections' was seeking to establish itself in power. The Congress (R) led by Vasant Dada - Y.B.Chavan combine much the experiencing an acid test as it was very much the question of the party's (May the Y.B.Chavan's) survival in the face of the two pronged challenge posed by the Janata party and the Congress (I) under the leadership of Mrs.Gandhi.

Thus Maharashtra politics was experiencing new trends in the form of various alliances. Previously under the Congress monolith, the rural elites with the help of capitalist class were firm and well established. The havenots had no particular outlet to assert effectively. The Congress (I) in the State had served the purpose of providing the channel with the help of which the have nots could assert and thereby challenge the Congress monolith and through it, defeat the virtual power holders. On the whole, the 1978 elections marked a new trend of involving the passive participants into active ones. The Congress (R) was still deriving support from its hitherto sinews of power, i.e the sugar cooperatives the Z.Ps, the rural-based institutes etc. still supporting by and large to the Congress(R). In other words, the traditional loyalties in the form of caste, the class loyalties in the form of capitalists and landlords supported the Congress (R) as their interests were attached with the party. This combination had worked well before, and under the changed circumstances, it was again on the test.

In absence of any specific issues, the parties were harping on different issues. For instance, the Janata party promised that it would end the corrupt Government, bring about total revolution, and decentralize power. The Janata party was also alarming the people over the rise of authoritarian forces. While the Congress (R) leaders like Y.B.Chavan, Vasant Dada, V.P. Naik and Tidke were attacking the Janata as the party of Jana Sangh. which was nothing but R. S. S.<sup>32</sup> Thus the

Congress (R) leaders were capitalizing over the communal sentiments. Mr. Yeshwantrao Mohite went on par below level to term the Janata party as the Shetji Bhatji Combine.<sup>33</sup>

This was an attempt to alienate the Janata Party from the Maratha community. They were alarming the Marathas about the challenge to their hitherto dominance in the State power and at the same time they were alarming the Muslims and backward communities about the imminent coming to power of R. S. S.<sup>34</sup> The Congress (R) leaders were also attacking Mrs. Gandhi for her authoritarianism.

While the Congress (I) leaders especially Mrs. Gandhi came down heavily on the Janata, branding it as the party of R. S. S. Mrs. Gandhi also attacked the Congress (R) leaders especially Y. B. Chavan, that he had joined hands with the Janata and that the Janata and the Congress (R) together wanted to finish her. She was also capitalising on the Janata infighting.<sup>35</sup> The assembly elections were crucial one for Mrs. Gandhi personally as after the split of the party she was trying to justify and seek legitimacy for herself and the new Congress party under her stewardship. She was keen to reassert herself and this was not an easy task as the major leaders of Maharashtra were still in the Congress (R). Y. B. Chavan was fighting tooth and nail to strengthen his own leadership which suffered some jolts since the Lok Sabha elections.

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Mrs. Gandhi wanted to prove that her congress was the only true-congress. It was a question of her political survival. To achieve the objective, she hit at the weakest link of the Congress (R) and the Janata and mobilized the depressed classes.<sup>36</sup> She was driving home the point that she was the real champion of the depressed classes.

The task was - equally difficult for the Congress (R) which was on the verge of erosion, Y.B. Chavan's reputation was at stake. He had to rehabilitate it through mandate of the people in the face of attempts of alienating the Congress (R) from minorities and backward communities by Mrs. Gandhi and on the other hand, the Janata's growing political impact over the state.

The Janata party was looking forward to consolidate itself in the State. It was in fact facing an easy task as the rival Congress parties were out to divide the traditional Congress.

Aftermath the Loksabha elections, some issues did leave repercussions to an extent over the elections though of trivial importance to the majority of the electorate. For instance, agitations led by Neo Buddhists RPI (Gavai) to demand facilities same as the schedule castes and schedule tribes. The Janata Government denied to fulfil these demands. Secondly 54 days agitation by the State Government employees demanding Dearness Allowance equal to the Central Government employees and other demands which were rejected by Vasant Dada the Cong (R) Chief Minister. And lastly, the growing communal riots in different

parts of the country under the Janata Government damaged the Janata party's image among the Muslims. These issues altogether had some bearing upon the concerned sections of electorate.

6. Election Results and Analysis :- In the total of 288 seats, the Janata emerged as the single largest party with 99 seats followed by Congress (A) 69 and Congress(I) 62. The results were quite embarrassing as the Congress (I) which was not at all an organized party, secured 62 seats while the more confident Janata party failed to secure majority - may its allies together with Janata also fell much short of majority - total 130 seats only. The PWP which was demanding 80 seats from Janata and failing which it parted company with it and had contested 88 seats, just secured 13 seats only and a total of 5% votes. Though due to split in the Janata and the PWP votes both the parties lost 30 seats.

The assembly elections divided Maharashtra electorally repeating with some degree of difference however same phenomenon of sixth general elections. For instance, in Vidharbha, the Congress (I) secured 46 out of 66 seats. Six Congress(I) candidates who could not be allotted the party symbol were also elected in Vidarbha.<sup>37</sup> While the Janata party once again failed to make a dent in the Vidarbha and was



STATEMENT SHOWING THE SECOND HIGHEST POSITION OF  
PARTIES IN THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. 1978

TABLE NO. IV

Parties	Bombay Dn. (Bombay+Kon- kan+ Khandesh)	Western Mahara- shtra	Marathwada	Vidharbha	Total
Janata	-	37	10	27	74
Cong.(R)	35	40	14	10	99
Cong.(I)	12	8	6	4	30
P.W.P.	4	8	6	3	21
Indv.& Others	14	18	10	22	64
TOTAL	65	111	46	66	288

Source: Statistical Abstract of Maharashtra 1978-79 p p-440

2. The daily 'Maharashtra Times' Bombay dated: 1 / 3 / 1978

3. The daily 'Nav-Shakti' Bombay dated:- 8-3-1978.

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content with 4 seats only while the Congress (R) was almost uprooted and could get just 2 seats. Thus it was clear that Vidarbha almost went the Congress (I) way neglecting the Janata as well as the Congress (R). The overwhelming defeat of Janata and Cong (R) in this region were largely attributed to the following causes.<sup>38</sup>

i) During emergency, Mr. S.B. Chavan the then chief minister of Maharashtra had successfully implemented the 20 point programme. It was comparatively well implemented in Vidarbha. All this led to the increase Mrs. Gandhi's popularity among the lower sections of society especially in Rural Areas.<sup>39</sup>

ii) The Janata party organization was rather weak as compared to other regions of the State.<sup>40</sup>

iii) The role of the Congress (R) leader Mr. V.P. Naik, was ambiguous. Though he was in Cong. (R) his followers were in Congr. (I).<sup>41</sup>

iv) The growing atrocities on Harijans in different parts of the country damaged the image of the Janata. Secondly the Neo-Buddhists were denied facilities same as SCs and STs. In Vidarbha SCs, STs constituted 28% of total population.

v) Mrs. Gandhi visited Vidarbha twice and addressed rallies even in the remotest places. On the other hand, no elder leader of the Janata took care to counter Mrs. Gandhi's influence especially the charges she was levelling against



Performance of the major Political Parties in the  
Assembly Elections 1978.

TABLE No.IV A

PARTIES	SEATS CONTESTED	SEATS WON	% OF VOTES
JANATA	208	99	27.20%
CONGRESS (I)	203	62	17.8%
CONGRESS (R)	259	69	24.5%
P.W.P.	88	13	5.05%
C.P.I.M	12	9	<u>NA</u> %
C.P.I.	48	1	<u>NA</u> %

Source: Statistical Abstract of Maharashtra 1978-79 pp- 440

2. The daily 'Maharashtra Times' Bombay dated: 1-3-1978

3. The daily 'Nav-Shakti' Bombay dated: 8-3-1978.

Janata party. Even the State Janata President Mr. S.M. Joshi did not visit Vidarbha during the poll campaign.<sup>42</sup>

v) As mentioned earlier, most of the Vidarbha leaders N.M. Tirpude, Vasant Sathe, Mrs. Prabha Rao, Mrs. Saroj Khaparde, etc. had joined the Congress (I) and the parties active in Vidarbha like Forward Block under Jambuwant Rao Lhote, and many factions of Dalit Panthers etc. had entered into an alliance with the Cong.(I).

vi) The Janata party did not field adequate candidates from backward communities while the Cong (I) had fielded Kolis, Banjaraas, Tellis, Dhangars, etc.etc.<sup>43</sup>

In Marathwada, no single party could get majority though the Janata and allies had got 7 out of 8 seats in the 77 Lok Sabha elections. In this election the Janata got just 15 seats while the Cong (R) - 16 followed by the Cong.(I) 4 seats. The P.W.P. which had secured 3 seats in 77 elections was content with mere 6 seat in the assembly elections.<sup>44</sup> Thus in Marathwada the Janata and Cong (R) almost fared evenly with no party getting majority in 46 seats of Maharashtra. It was an erosion to Janata while the Cong (R) did better compared to its performance in the general elections. S.B.Chavan's Maharashtra Socialist Congress could not make any impact in Marathwad as worth the name . Totally the party got 2 while it had contested 26 throughout the state.

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While in Western Maharashtra the strong-hold of Cong.(R), it could get 47 seats and emerged as a major party though it did not secure even majority in the region which had a total of 111 seats. This was clearly an indication of the downfall of Cong (R) party and the leadership of Y.B.Chavan. The Janata had secured 30 seats while the Congr (I) got 12 and the P.W.P. only 2. The Cong (R) defeat was more surprising as it had its deep roots in the region in the form of Sugar Cooperatives, educational institutes and Zilla Parishads.

In Bombay and Kokan, the Janata once again emerged victorious. Out of 65 total seats, the Janata got 49 seats and 48.52% of votes. In Bombay, the Janata and allies captured all the 34 seats. The Janata had contested 28 seats all getting elected. While the Cong (R) could get just 4 seats in the whole Bombay and Kokan Region and the Cong (I) drew a blank in the region. In terms of votes, the cong (R) got 14.39% of votes in Bombay and the Cong (I) 13.32% without any win.

The secret of Janata success in Bombay and Kokan was that the party paid much attention to the region, e.g. all the major Janata leaders like Mr. Morarji Desai, Vajpayee, Jagjivan Ram, etc.etc. had addressed rallies throughout the region contrary to other regions.<sup>44</sup>

Secondly, the Janata had fielded more non-Marathi candidates - the strategy behind it was to attract the Non-Marathi voters while the Marathi voters were taken for granted.<sup>45</sup> The strategy worked well for the Janata.

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In terms of second position after the winning candidates, the Janata stood second number party in 74 constituencies (37 in Western Maharashtra 10 in Marathwada, 27 constituencies in Vidharbha) while the Cong (R) got second highest number of votes in 99 seats (in which 40 constituencies were from the Congress (R) strong-hold Western Maharashtra. 35 in Bombay, Kokan and coastal areas, 14 in Marathwada, while 10 in Vidarbha). And the Cong (I) got second highest votes in 30 constituencies (12 in Bombay, Kokan and coastal areas, 8 in Maharashtra; 6 in Marathwada and 4 in Vidarbha). The P.W.P. stood second in 21 constituencies (4 Bombay and Kokan, 8 Western Maharashtra, 6 Marathwada and 3 Vidarbha).

Another interesting aspect of election was that together the Congress parties polled 42.3% of votes as against 47.02% in the Lok-Sabha indicating that the bulk of traditional Congress voters remained loyal to that Congress. Unitedly thus, the congress did not suffer much as it had together captured 131 seats. Thus checking the Janata party's influence. On the other hand, the Janata party which had secured 31.39% votes in 1977 but in 1978 it secured only 27.2% - a reversal of 4.19% of votes. In the Lok Sabha election the Janata party had contested 60% of seats and in this election, it fought 74% of seats. Also the failure to reach understanding with P.W.P. over seat adjustment and loose party organisation in Vidarbha etc. were largely responsible for poor show.

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while the Janata swept Bombay and Kokan, the Cong (R) secured only 47 out of 111 in Western Maharashtra, the remaining shared by Janata and Cong (I) etc. Marathwada was jointly represented by all the parties as no single party emerged victorious in the region.

Thirdly, the much eroded bases of Y.B.Chavan group in the sixth Lok Sabha elections were further eroded almost to indicate the clear decline of Y.B.Chavan's leadership. This was also proved that despite all resources at its disposal, the Cong (R), which was well-entrenched in power capitalizing over traditional as well as class loyalties, failed to make a dent even in its own stronghold i.e. Western Maharashtra. It could also be concluded that the traditional loyalties were not working in the assembly elections. One could observe that the Cong (R) leaders open communal appeals also proved useless.

In this elections, the Cong (I) emerged as a new force in the State. It was an attempt by Mrs.Gandhi to reassert herself and to seek legitimacy for her congress through an appeal to the depressed classes. She succeeded in mobilizing the depressed and the downtrodden in the State. One could observe the unhappiness of those classes with the ruling Cong (R) serving the interests of the landlords and capitalists. The Cong (I) provided them the channel through which they expressed their mandate against the Cong (R) and the Janata party. Thus it was essentially a new trend in State politics.

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This resulted in increased politicization of various social strata. In other words, the competitiveness grew in its degree and magnitude from this election. Similarly one could see the clear alienation of the Janata party from the depressed classes. Totally a record no. of voters 67.6% exercised their franchise in this election. This speaks in volumes about the nature of competitiveness in the fray. It was clear that the Janata party failed to consolidate its position in the electoral terms as votes were reduced by 4% and majority in the assembly segments reduced from 128 to 99 it was largely due to inability of the party to penetrate rural areas effectively. The election results ended once for all Y.B-Chavan's hold over state politics as despite huge resources and organisational set up his party failed to good number of seats it became a party confined to Western Maharashtra. The Congress (I) successfully challenged the Janata and the Congress (R) and carved out a special position for itself in the state. The party politicised hitherto neglected sections in the society and did well where<sup>-ever</sup> it had a strong base there is a merit in Mrs. Gandhi remark to U.P. Naik that it had sided with Indira Congress along with his followers. The Congress (I) might have secured majority in the assembly. The PWP lost its important position in the state politics. The Janata party failed to exploit over fragmentation in the Congress votes hence it had to play politics of alliances and coalition governments politics of coalition was a new trend in the state politics.



7. Trends of Assembly Elections :- The 1978 assembly elections may be termed as the new phase in Maharashtra Politics. The State entered in a new era of political instability as no party emerged victorious for the first time in the state. Though the Janata party was the single largest party after the elections in terms of seats, it failed to consolidate itself in the state. The Janata party was rejected by Vidarbha indicating to its failure to muster support from the region.

Secondly, the elections saw the electoral division or rather diversification of different regions' votes. No single party was in a position as to be representing adequately the whole state - a vital condition for political stability. It was evident from the results that Vidarbha was dominated by Cong (I).

Chapter II.

Assembly elections in Maharashtra.

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