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### Leadership conflict and the disintegration of the Indian socialist movement: Personal ambition, power and policy

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# **Leadership Conflict and the Disintegration of the Indian Socialist Movement: Personal Ambition, Power and Policy**

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## I

Leadership conflict has been a persistent, indeed an endemic, problem in Indian party politics and a recurring theme in academic and journalistic discussions of political behaviour in India.<sup>1</sup> No major political party in India has escaped some more or less serious and disruptive form of leadership conflict and a consequent academic study or journalistic analysis of its causes and consequences. Leadership conflict is hardly unique to party politics in India. Nor is it an exceptional form of conflict in organisations generally. When leadership conflicts arise in party organisations or in government, whether in India, in other Asian societies, or in the West, a recurring question that often tantalises observers is the extent to which individual personalities and personal conflicts are decisive factors in influencing the outcome of such conflicts and the extent to which organisational and procedural restraints limit the independence and importance of personal actions. A related question is the extent to which, and the conditions under which, political actors in conflict situations pursue mainly their own personal ambitions or actively and primarily seek to implement principles and policies. In India, as elsewhere in the world, whenever a dramatic public event such as a party split occurs, there are usually observers who interpret such conflicts as arising out of personal ambitions and others who describe the same conflicts in terms of organisations, procedures, principles, and policies. There seems also to be a common tendency in both India and the West for external observers to personalise conflicts which have ideological or institutional features. Ideological groups and tendencies are given personal labels—e.g., ‘Stalinists’ and ‘Trotskyites’ in the West or ‘Lohiaites’ for radical Socialists in India and the ‘Dange Line’ for a particular tendency in the Indian Communist movement. The question then is whether such personalisation of ostensibly ideological conflicts is merely a shorthand device to simplify description or is a more perceptive or realistic way of describing such conflicts. Much discussion of leadership conflict in India has focused on

the question of whether the nomenclature of conflict in Indian political parties is an accurate reflection of reality. That is, is it or is it not valid to see party conflicts in India as based upon personal dislikes, animosities, and vendettas and to see the issues in dispute as covers for essentially personal conflicts or is it that the personalisation of conflict is merely a stylistic cultural form that covers more deep-seated ideological, social, or institutional conflicts? On these questions, observers have offered different answers both with regard to Indian political behaviour in general and in relation to particular cases of leadership conflicts leading to party splits.

Weiner, in his *Party Politics in India*, argued that, although party splits in opposition parties did not relate critically to ideological disputes, neither could they be seen as stemming principally from personal animosities between individual leaders. Rather, it was pressure from the rank and file in the parties that tended to precipitate party splits.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, a recent post mortem on the PSP has suggested that a critical factor in the failure of the Socialist movement in India has been the defects of its leaders:

The great Socialist leaders—Jayaprakash Narayan, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, J. B. Kripalani, and Asoka Mehta—all tended to be *prima donnas*, each espousing his own kind of political salvation, each indulging in the fruitless ideological abstractions so characteristic of Indian intellectual politicians and each unwilling to compromise with the others. Consequently, over a period of time, these leaders have all renounced, defected, or been expelled from the Party, each time leaving it a little weaker by taking with them their loyal supporters.<sup>3</sup>

The Indian Socialist movement has once again presented external observers with a sequence of events that raises these questions anew. During the past several years, the fragments of the Socialist movement in India have undergone an intensive period of merging and splitting that has culminated in the organisational disintegration of the movement and its elimination as an effective political force in the two states of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar where it had been strongest and where the Socialist parties had recently been in power in coalition governments. Although the restoration of the dominance of the Indian National Congress under Mrs Gandhi's leadership and the leftward movement of the Congress in recent years influenced the course of events in the Socialist movement, the disintegration of the Socialist parties has been a consequence more of internal than of external factors. It constitutes a failure of party institutionalisation brought about principally as a consequence of internal conflict among leaders and groups within the movement. As such, in addition to its special interest to those who have been concerned about the prospects for democratic socialism in India, it represents a particular case of a common pattern of failures of party institutionalisation in India and other developing countries.

A major party split provides an attractive and convenient opportunity for a detailed examination of the relationship between leadership conflict and the problem of party institutionalisation. In a large party or movement, it is a great public event, widely analysed in the press, and openly

discussed by the participants themselves. Moreover, it forces the people involved in the movement to take a stand and to reveal their positions, thereby bringing into focus the issues in dispute and the alignments of forces on one side or another. It raises for every person involved critical questions concerning his personal political career, his future opportunities to achieve positions of power, influence, and status, and his attitude towards whatever policy issues may be in dispute. For all involved it is a time of crisis and tension when every person has to decide how best to realise his ideal and material interests and how to reconcile the two.

A party split in an ideologically-oriented movement in India also raises important theoretical issues concerning the model of conflict relevant to the situation. Several conflict models for the analysis of Indian politics have been used by different observers in different situations. The factional model looks to factors of personal ambition and struggle for personal positions of power as the critical ones in explaining or predicting the course of inner party conflicts in India.<sup>4</sup> Ideological models suggest that inner party conflicts can be explained better and alignments predicted more accurately in terms of genuine differences in ideological preferences and policy orientations between opposed groups rather than in terms of personal loyalties and conflicts of personal ambition.<sup>5</sup> A third model argues that leadership conflicts are often reflections of underlying structural conflicts between class or caste groups in Indian society.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of this article is to examine the causes of the recent split and disintegration of the Indian Socialist movement and to use the split as a case study for testing alternative explanations and models of conflict, particularly leadership conflict, in Indian politics. It will be argued that the Socialist split demonstrates the complex interconnectedness of power, personal interest, and principles in politics. Politics *in public arenas* is a struggle for power in which both personal ambition and issues of principle are invariably involved. Personal ambition is involved because, for most important politicians, politics is a career. Issues of principle are always involved also because no one will be taken seriously in politics who does not attach some purpose to his efforts to achieve power for himself or for the group which he leads. Struggle for power is always involved because people need to secure power to effect the principles they espouse. However, the case to be analysed below suggests the hypothesis that personal ambition and struggles for power are the proximate causes of party splits, not issues of principle, for the perhaps too obvious reason that there is no point in splitting until one's career and the interests of one's group are at stake. As long as inner party struggles are confined to mere discussion of ideological principles and policy alternatives, it can be predicted confidently that no major party split will occur. It is when principled differences become concretised into alternative action strategies for achieving power or implementing policy that the potential for party splits develops. At the same time, not every internal party struggle which becomes concretised in these ways leads to splits. For a split or a defection to occur or to become an immediate danger, the implementation of one strategy or the adoption of a particular policy must involve power or

benefit for one group and the denial of power or benefit to a rival group by that very action or decision.

The empirical focus of this article is on the events that occurred in the Socialist movement shortly before and after the merger of the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) and the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) into the Socialist Party (SP) in August 1971 and the events between this date and the split in the Socialist movement, culminating in the re-creation of the SSP in December 1972. The data on which the analysis is based consist principally of excerpts from interviews with most of the leading persons (and some less prominent persons) involved in the merger and split, supplemented by information available from party documents and from the press. These data will be analysed not only for factual documentation but also as examples of the ways in which the politicians themselves articulate the bases of and motivations for their own behaviour and those of their opponents. I will first give some background concerning previous splits and mergers in the Socialist movement; second, provide a factual account of the sequence of events between August 1971 and December 1972; and, third, present and analyse some of the responses I received from Socialist leaders in my interviews on the question of the reasons for the latest split, focusing first on the conflict involving the Uttar Pradesh Socialists and then considering the events in Bihar. In the concluding section of the article, I will offer an explanation of the recent split that transcends the particular reasons given by respondents but accommodates their own perceptions as well.

## II

Leaving aside minor regional splits and group defections from one or another of the various Socialist parties that have come into existence in the post-independence period in India, there have been four major periods of merging and splitting activity in the Socialist movement since 1947. The first period, amply documented elsewhere, occurred between 1948 and 1952 and involved the 1948 break of the Congress Socialist Party from the Congress and the formation of the Socialist Party (SP), followed in 1952 by the merger of the SP with the KMPP to form the PSP.<sup>7</sup> Since the founding of the PSP in 1952, there have been three major party splits.<sup>8</sup> The first took place in 1955 when Dr Rammanohar Lohia, Madhu Limaye, and their followers formed a new Socialist Party after differences with other leaders in the PSP on the question of a police shooting in Kerala, which occurred during the tenure of a PSP government there, and on the issue of whether the Awadi declaration of the Congress, setting forth the goal of socialism for India, provided a basis for cooperation between the PSP and the Congress. Asoka Mehta and his followers in the party argued that the Awadi declaration provided a new basis for cooperation with the Congress whereas Dr Lohia and Madhu Limaye, carrying with them most of the Uttar Pradesh wing of the party, opposed cooperation with the Congress.

The next period of splitting and merging in the Socialist movement occurred after the 1962 general elections and after the expulsion of

Asoka Mehta from the party for accepting a post in the Congress government and the defection of many of his supporters to the Congress thereafter. The weakening of the PSP and the previous dismal performance of the PSP and the SP in the 1962 general elections contributed to a new unity drive in the Socialist movement which led to the merging of the PSP and the SP into a new party, the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), in June 1964. However, the new party was formed without real agreement on many issues of leadership, organisation, and policy and soon divided once again. Although there were several issues in dispute, the question of the status of Dr Lohia as leader of the unified party and the issue of alliances with other parties, particularly the Jana Sangh and CPI, were especially important in the public dialogue. Those PSP leaders who opposed both the leadership of Dr Lohia and the SSP policy of 'non-Congressism', which called for alliances with any parties of Right or Left to remove the Congress from power, left the SSP in January 1965 and revived the PSP. However, many former PSP members remained in the SSP. Consequently, the PSP emerged from this merger and split, seriously weakened, leaving the new SSP as the leading party of socialism in India, particularly in the Socialist party strongholds of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The most recent major period of merging and splitting in the Socialist movement, and the one with which this article is concerned, occurred after the 1971 Lok Sabha elections, when the SSP won only three seats and the PSP only two. These dismal results precipitated new merger talks, which culminated in the reunification of most of the SSP and PSP leadership cadres into the new Socialist Party in August 1971. As in previous mergers, however, disagreements within the top leadership of the merged parties were never satisfactorily resolved before the merger and they continued to plague the newly-formed SP after the merger. Failure to resolve persisting conflicts in the new party culminated once again in a major split in December 1972, in which this time the principal splitters were leadership cadres from the former SSP, who recreated that party at Patna in December 1972. This split left the SSP the weaker of the two units, but severely damaged both wings of the Socialist movement, particularly in UP and Bihar.

### III

A major portion of the public dialogue among contending leaders and groups during the most recent merger and split in the Socialist movement revolved around the question of alliance policy. In the 1971 Lok Sabha elections, the PSP and the SSP followed different strategies. The PSP reached electoral understandings in some states with Congress (R) whereas the SSP, continuing its strategy of 'non-Congressism', achieved electoral agreements principally with Congress (O), Jana Sangh, and Swatantra. Alliance policy also was a critical question at the state level. In UP, the PSP supported a Congress (R) government while the SSP sought to bring it down in alliance with Congress (O) and the BKD. In Bihar, the PSP joined in an electoral alliance with Congress (R) and the CPI in the 1971 elections at a time when the state government was controlled by a coalition of the SSP, Jana Sangh, Congress (O), and

Swatantra. However, there was disagreement within both the PSP and the SSP on the respective strategies followed by the two parties and, in the aftermath of the 1971 Lok Sabha elections, a movement among some groups within both parties to join forces once again.

In the PSP, sentiment for merger was more general and less divisive than in the SSP. In contrast, the SSP was clearly divided into two factions on the issue. One faction, the Bombay-Maharashtra contingent led by Madhu Limaye and George Fernandes, and supported by former PSP leaders such as S. M. Joshi, favoured dropping the policy of non-Congressism and merging with the PSP. A second faction, led by Raj Narain and the UP unit of the party, favoured continuation of the anti-ruling Congress alliance strategy and resisted merger with the PSP.<sup>9</sup> The Bihar unit, the strongest contingent of the SSP, was internally divided on the issue.

The movement for merger in both parties began in April 1971. In June agreement was reached on a merger of the two parties.<sup>10</sup> The first meeting of a national *ad hoc* committee of the new Socialist Party was held in New Delhi on 9 August. At this meeting Karpuri Thakur, a Socialist leader from Bihar who had been chairman of the SSP, was elected chairman of the new party and Madhu Dandavate of the PSP was elected general secretary.<sup>11</sup>

The troublesome question of alliance policy was put aside in the months before the 1972 general elections, which the SP decided to contest alone, with only minor adjustments at the constituency level.<sup>12</sup> The first serious signs of trouble with the new merger came from UP in October 1971 when a dispute arose over the selection of an *ad hoc* committee and a parliamentary committee for the state. It was, however, announced on October 24 that, 'after a five-hour heated discussion', the national committee had unanimously agreed on the composition of the UP committee.<sup>13</sup> In March 1972 news began to appear that the SP was on the brink of a split, that Raj Narain had filed his nomination papers for a Rajya Sabha seat from UP after being denied the nomination by the Central Parliamentary Board of the party, that he was seeking a merger of his faction with Congress (O), and that he would soon take his group out of the party.<sup>14</sup> In the meantime, Karpuri Thakur had resigned the chairmanship of the party because of its refusal of the Rajya Sabha nomination to Raj Narain. The national committee of the SP responded to Raj Narain's defiance of the Central Parliamentary Board by suspending him from the party for six months. On 14 May the Raj Narain group split from the SP and formed a parallel party at Allahabad, called the Socialist Party (Lohiavadi).<sup>15</sup> Karpuri Thakur at first sought to mediate between and to reunite the opposed factions, but, failing in his efforts, he formed a third separate unit called the Socialist Party (Samatavadi Ektavadi) whose aim was stated to be the restoration of unity in the Socialist movement. In December 1972 these two splinter groups merged at Patna and recreated the SSP.<sup>16</sup> The new SSP comprised most of the UP wing of the SP and approximately half of the Bihar legislative party, the other half having chosen to remain with the SP.

This bare description of the sequence of events in the disruption of

the Socialist movement in 1971 and 1972 seems to point towards one critical event as a 'cause' of the disunity, namely, the denial of the party nomination to Raj Narain to contest a Rajya Sabha seat and his defiance of the party decision. The official SP view of the causes of the split, as presented in SP publications,<sup>17</sup> did in fact trace the split to the personal role of Raj Narain. Several interview respondents, all of them now in the SP, also did so. However, their accounts differed in the extent to which other factors crept into their explanations.

The accounts that focused solely on Raj Narain's behaviour ran as follows. The national committee of the Socialist Party had passed a rule, that had previously been in force in both the old SP and the SSP, that persons who had been defeated in direct elections to the state legislative assemblies or to the Lok Sabha would not be given party nominations to contest indirect elections to the legislative councils or to the Rajya Sabha. The rule in question was framed, it was claimed, to support the principle of preventing 'bossism by preventing people who have lost elections from coming in through the back door and maintaining their grip in that way'.<sup>18</sup> Applying this rule, the Central Parliamentary Board of the SP denied the party nomination to Raj Narain to contest a Rajya Sabha seat from the UP Legislative Assembly constituency. It is then alleged that solely because his personal ambition was thereby frustrated, Raj Narain defied the party decision, contested the seat, and later formed a separate party.

This explanation puts the blame for the split squarely on Raj Narain and his personal frustration, but some Socialist leaders interviewed cast doubt on the validity of the circumstances and motivations involved in the passing of the rule in question. In my interviews on this point I had discovered that the rule had been passed by the executive committee of the new SP just before the Rajya Sabha election and with only a few people present. One SP respondent, asked if this was not a deliberate attempt to prevent Raj Narain from contesting, replied, 'So what? Even so, it was a general decision. It applied to many people'.<sup>19</sup>

Some SP leaders also noted that there were fundamental differences on the original merger, with Raj Narain in opposition from the beginning. One respondent remarked that the Raj Narain group was reluctant to merge in the first place because they had been losing 'their grip over the party machine' since 1969 and they feared a loss of control 'over the U.P. party and over Bihar'.<sup>20</sup> This response places Raj Narain's suspension and split from the party in the context of a broader struggle for control of the party machinery in which Raj Narain had been losing ground for several years.

The presence of both ideological and organisational issues as part of the context of the split was suggested by another respondent, an office-bearer of the central unit of the SP. In answer to my question concerning the reasons for the split, this respondent gave two principal reasons, summarised in my interview notes below.

X gave two principal reasons for the recent split. The first was differences of ideology, particularly on the question of non-Congressism and over the Constitution Amendment Bill. On both these questions, the Madhu



Limaye-George Fernandes wing of the old SSP and the PSP people were on one side, whereas the Raj Narain group was on the other. . . . On the Constitution Bill, the ML-GF group and the PSP people took the position that the government should not have the right to alter the fundamental rights of the people, such as those pertaining to free speech, minorities, etc., but that the government should have the right to alter property rights. However, the Raj Narain group argued that Dr. Lohia had opposed the bill and, therefore, they would also oppose the bill.

The second reason X gave was a struggle for control over the party machinery between the ML-GF group and Raj Narain. He said that when the August, 1971 merger took place, it had been agreed that the executives of the SSP and the PSP would merge into one. However, at the last minute, Raj Narain did some counting and discovered that he would be in a distinct minority. Consequently, he began to demand that the executive be constituted in such a way as to give him and his group a dominant position. The PSP people spoke to him and assured him that they would not throw their support to the ML-GF group against him. However, this did not satisfy him. Then there was the question of the Rajya Sabha election. The parliamentary committee of the UPSP voted 6 to 5 against giving the Rajya Sabha seat to Raj Narain. [I asked about the state legislature party.] X said the legislature party was solid for Raj Narain, with one exception, a person who did not vote.<sup>21</sup>

This last interview is noteworthy in its placing of the issue of Raj Narain's contest for the Rajya Sabha as a culmination in a sequence of conflicts between Raj Narain's group and that of his opponents in which issues of principle and organisational control both were involved.

Thus, from Raj Narain's opponents in the SP, the following account of the split has emerged. The proximate cause of the split was the denial of the Rajya Sabha ticket to Raj Narain, whose personal ambition was thereby frustrated. However, even his opponents either admitted or revealed that the context of the denial of the ticket to Raj Narain was a long-standing struggle for control over the organisational machinery of the Socialist movement in which Raj Narain had been losing ground even in his own province. Moreover, some of his opponents conceded that real differences of principle between Raj Narain and his opponents also existed before the split.

What explanations did the Raj Narain camp give for the same events? One SSP party leader argued that there were two principal causes of the split. The first was that Madhu Limaye and George Fernandes had brought the old SSP to a position where a merger with the PSP could not be avoided. The merger, in this view, was itself part of an effort by the Limaye-Fernandes group to win control over the party machinery by adding the PSP forces to their existing strength in the SSP. In the merger negotiations the SSP had established four conditions for a merger, namely, that the PSP accept completely and without reservations the policies of the SSP on non-Congressism, caste, language, and prices. This respondent argued that, although the PSP did agree to the four conditions, they did not believe in them, but that Madhu Limaye and George Fernandes persuaded the PSP leaders to accept them so that they could get a majority in the national committee, after which the PSP leaders could forget about

their agreement to the conditions. In short, the Raj Narain forces were tricked into a merger which they did not want, whose purpose was to outmanoeuvre them in a struggle for control of the party machinery.

The second reason which this respondent gave as a cause of the split was the existence of 'a personal allergy between Madhu Limaye and Raj Narain'. However, it is clear from his account that that 'allergy' took the form of a full-blown struggle for control of the party machinery between the allies and followers of the two men. This respondent concluded his explanation of the split in the following way:

This [the internal party struggle] was the real background to the split and not the Rajya Sabha issue. No doubt, Madhu Limaye would have told you that the main cause of the split was the issue of the ticket to Raj Narain for the Rajya Sabha. However, in fact, the denial of the ticket to Raj Narain was only the culmination of all that had gone before.<sup>22</sup>

A second explanation of the split from the Raj Narain side emphasised issues of alliance strategy and ideology, but also reaffirmed many of the points made by the respondent just cited. The second explanation was as follows. There was a fundamental division in the Socialist movement before the merger between those, in both the SSP and PSP, who believed that Indira Gandhi was a socialist and those who did not, who thought her socialism was fraudulent. The Raj Narain forces considered Mrs Gandhi's socialism to be of the latter variety and, therefore, followed a policy of alliance with Congress (O) against Mrs Gandhi's ruling Congress. Those who believed that Mrs Gandhi's socialism was genuine, namely, S. M. Joshi, N. G. Goray, Madhu Limaye, and George Fernandes, favoured a policy of support for 'progressive' measures taken by the ruling Congress. These SSP leaders joined hands with the former PSP leaders at the very first meeting of the merged party, on 9 August 1971, on the issue of the right of parliament to amend the fundamental rights in the Constitution. The Raj Narain forces opposed granting parliament such a right partly because they feared its misuse by Mrs Gandhi's government, whereas others supported the amendment because it was ostensibly directed against property rights primarily and was, therefore, a move towards socialist reforms. When Raj Narain opposed not only the Twenty-Fourth Amendment Bill, but the right of the *ad hoc* committee of the merged party to take any fundamental decisions on policy and programme, he was given notice to show cause why disciplinary action should not be taken against him. The Rajya Sabha election then followed. According to this explanation, it was Indira Gandhi herself who opposed Raj Narain's entry into the Rajya Sabha and who 'managed everything, with the help of these friends—Goray, Limaye, George, Joshi'.<sup>23</sup>

A third respondent from the SSP side also argued that policy differences—on language policy and caste policy as well as on the Twenty-Fourth Amendment Bill—separated the two sides. However, he said that 'the immediate cause of the split' was that there 'was a group which was trying to stifle democracy in the party'. Because the constituency for the Rajya Sabha seat was the UP legislative assembly and because the UPSP

legislature party had supported Raj Narain's candidacy, it was 'against the very tenets of democracy' for the SP 'to decide against the wishes of the legislators who were the real voters in the . . . Rajya Sabha election'. Thus, this respondent countered the principle of preventing 'bossism' through back-door entry into the Rajya Sabha with the principle of democracy and respect for the wishes of the constituency most concerned with the matter.<sup>24</sup>

Although each explanation of the split so far presented has a particular emphasis, it is now possible to put together a reasonably coherent picture of the events connected with and the context of the denial to Raj Narain of a ticket to contest the Rajya Sabha election and his suspension from the party. Some respondents on both sides agreed that differences of issues, principles, and policies separated the two sides, that there had also been a continuing struggle for control of the organisational machinery of the Socialist movement, that the merger of the SSP and the PSP influenced the balance of forces in the merged party against Raj Narain, and that the denial of the ticket to Raj Narain was the culmination of long-standing divisions between the two sides. The chief differences of interpretation concerned which were primary and which secondary factors, which independent and which dependent. On this matter also there was a converse agreement of both sides. That is, both sides agreed that personal ambition, power, and principle all were at stake, but that, for the opposed camp, principled differences were merely symbols being manipulated for the sake of power and personal advantage whereas for their own camp the principles were primary.

How is it possible for an outside observer to determine impartially what were the causes of the split in the Socialist movement in the face of such contradictory interpretations by the participants themselves of the known facts? There are two kinds of distinctions that can aid in resolving the question. One is between proximate and remote causes, between specific events and the background and context in which they occur. In this case, it can be said that the proximate cause of the split in the party was the denial of the ticket to Raj Narain, but the remote cause was the struggle for control of the party organisation which, in turn, also involved articulations of opposed views on issues of principle. However, this explanation does not solve the question of whether or not the issues in dispute were independent or dependent factors. On this last point, it is necessary to introduce the second distinction, namely, that between consistent and inconsistent use of issues and symbols. If rivals in a political conflict adopt consistent positions on issues over time, then the presumption must be that genuine differences of principle are causal influences in the dispute. If, however, a contestant in a struggle involving power, control, and personal ambition shifts his stand on an issue at the moment of opportunity and achieves personal or power-political ends thereby or if the issues are introduced only after a move for personal advantage or for political power has been made, then the presumption must be that personal ambition and power considerations have been primary and issues either secondary or merely pretexts. A further problem arises here, however, namely the fact that principled shifts on issues some-

times do take place among individuals and groups and that such shifts may occur simultaneously with but independently of struggles for power. In the conflict between the Raj Narain and Limaye-Fernandes forces, Raj Narain maintained a consistent 'all parties against the ruling Congress' position on alliances for the previous seven years whereas the Limaye-Fernandes group had been shifting its alliance policy to one of alliance with parties of the Left only. This shift also made it possible for the Limaye-Fernandes forces to join hands with the PSP leaders in the merged party to defeat Raj Narain. The question then becomes one of whether this shift on alliance policy *was for the purpose* of defeating Raj Narain in the struggle for power or not. Since the shift on issues had been building up over several years, it is not possible to demonstrate in this case that the issues were secondary and the struggle for power primary.

The centrality of the issue of alliance policy does, however, support the general proposition that party splits occur only when the adoption of a policy or a tactic promises power or advantage to one group while denying them to its rivals. In India's complex multi-party federal system, a decision by a party to pursue a well-defined alliance strategy nearly always works to the advantage and enhances the power prospects of one group and denies it to another. Thus, the strategy of 'all parties against the ruling Congress' offered the prospect of power to the supporters of Raj Narain in the SP in Uttar Pradesh because the principal alternatives to the ruling Congress in that state have been Congress (O) and the Jana Sangh. Such an alliance strategy provided no incentive to the Limaye-Fernandes camp, however, because it did not offer them or their supporters any prospect of power in their principal arenas—Maharashtra and the Union parliament.

Even the seemingly more abstract issues of the Twenty-Fourth Amendment Bill bore a relation to the bedrock issue of alliance strategy in the Socialist movement. On the face of it, the issues related to whether or not it was desirable to permit the Union government to amend the fundamental rights in the Constitution. The Limaye-Fernandes-Joshi argument here was that amendment of property rights would facilitate socialist legislation. The Raj Narain argument was that the precedent would make possible further amendments of other fundamental rights and would facilitate dictatorship. However, I would argue that the Raj Narain forces opposed the Twenty-Fourth Amendment Bill also because they favoured an all-out strategy of opposition to the ruling Congress, which involved a denial of socialist legitimacy to any actions of her government and, thereby, also enhanced the prospects for alliance with the conservative parties opposed to Congress—Congress (O), Jana Sangh, and Swatantra. In contrast, the Limaye-Fernandes-Joshi position is related to an alternative and commonly used strategy among Left parties in India of alliance with parties of the Left, combined with support for the progressive measures of the ruling party and opposition to its reactionary measures.

To summarise, my argument in this case and in general is that frustrated personal ambition and struggle for power are invariably both

the proximate causes and necessary conditions for major party splits. However, they are usually not sufficient conditions. For petty politicians with little following, personal ambition and power may be both necessary and sufficient conditions to defect from a political organisation; but, for more prominent leaders, who must retain the support of a following to maintain their positions over time, issues of principle must also be or at least must be seen to be at stake. The game which leaders in conflict play with each other in a struggle for power is to place their opponents in a position where issues of principle appear either uninvolved in or secondary to personal ambition and power while their own actions are seen to be based on a consistent pursuit of ideal goals. In the struggle for power in the Indian Socialist movement, Raj Narain was placed in a position, partly because of his own ambitions but also because of the design of his rivals, in which it was made to appear that the Socialist Party was breaking up solely because of his frustrated personal ambition. We have seen, however, that the denial of the party ticket to Raj Narain and his defiance of the party decision must be placed in a broader context. While an examination of the context does not eliminate personal ambition as a cause of the party split, it does imply that mere personal opportunism—an opportunism divorced from principle and oriented solely to power—was not the cause of the split.

#### IV

So far, the analysis of the causes of the split in the Socialist movement has focused on the events surrounding and preceding the denial of the Rajya Sabha ticket to Raj Narain. We have still to consider the question of the split in the Bihar unit of the party, its connection with the division between Raj Narain and the Limaye-Fernandes wing of the Socialist movement, and the role of Karpuri Thakur in the split. Before these questions can be discussed adequately, it is necessary to provide some background information on the Socialist parties in Bihar.

Bihar has been the leading stronghold of the Indian Socialist movement since the First General Elections of 1952, when the SP emerged as the principal opposition party in the state and as the most important state unit of the SP in India. After the formation of the PSP in 1952, the Bihar PSP became the leading state unit of the Socialist party in the country. The Lohia Socialist Party, formed after the split of 1954, also acquired strength in Bihar, but considerably less than the PSP. However, after the Asoka Mehta defections from the PSP in 1964, after the merging and splitting activities of 1964-65, and after the 1967 elections, the SSP emerged as the predominant Socialist party in the state, much stronger than the rump PSP. After the 1971 merger of the PSP and the SSP into the SP, the SP contested the 1972 elections in Bihar, polling 16.1 per cent of the votes and winning 33 seats.

Although the SSP rather than the PSP was the principal party of the non-Communist left after 1965 in Bihar, it was also the more internally divided of the two parties. Three men in the SSP acted as its principal spokesmen between 1965 and 1972—Karpuri Thakur, Ramanand Tiwari,

and Bhola Prasad Singh.<sup>25</sup> On the issue of alliance policy in this period, Ramanand Tiwari and Bhola Prasad Singh were spokesmen for two opposed views. Ramanand Tiwari and other former PSP leaders, including Karpuri Thakur, tended to favour moving away from the policy of non-Congressism in general to a more specific policy of alliance with the PSP and other parties of the Left. Bhola Prasad Singh acted as the principal spokesman for the group in Bihar which continued to favour the strategy of non-Congressism.

The issue of alliance strategy was one of immediate practical consequence in the period between 1967 and 1972 when the SSP played a critical role in the formation and fall of the numerous non-Congress governments which came into being in this period. From 1967 until 1969, the SSP and the PSP followed the strategy of alliance with all parties of Right and Left to form non-Congress governments and to keep the Congress from power. After the split in the Congress in 1969, however, the Left parties in general and the Socialist parties in particular faced the more difficult problem of deciding whether to oppose, to ally with, or to remain distant from one or both wings of the Congress. The issue of alliance partners was even more salient for the Socialist parties in Bihar than in UP because the political balance of forces offered several alternative routes to power. In Bihar, the CPI and the PSP opted for alliance with Congress (R), but the SSP remained divided. The wing for which Bhola Prasad Singh was spokesman argued for alliance with Congress (O), Jana Sangh, and Swatantra against Congress (R), whereas the wing led by Ramanand Tiwari favoured alliance with Congress (R) and the PSP. The conflict between the two wings of the party on this issue became especially keen in January and February 1970 when the two wings of the party worked at cross-purposes, the wing led by Ramanand Tiwari seeking to form a government in alliance with the PSP, Loktantric Congress, CPI, and BKD while the other wing sought to form a government in alliance with Congress (O), Jana Sangh, and Swatantra. At this time Karpuri Thakur was not identified strongly with either side.

Partly as a result of the failure of the SSP to resolve its internal conflicts, the Congress (R) succeeded in forming a coalition government without including any of the major left parties. In the meantime the group of Bhola Prasad Singh prevailed in the Bihar legislative assembly on the issue of alliance policy by bringing the SSP into a united legislature party (SVD) with the Congress (O), Jana Sangh, and Swatantra against the wishes of Ramanand Tiwari. At this point, with a Congress (R)-dominated ministry in power, led by a chief minister from a backward caste, and the SVD coalition in opposition led by Ramanand Tiwari, a Brahman, a caste issue was raised in the SSP. Bhola Prasad Singh, though he was spokesman for the faction opposed to the Congress (R) ministry, said that it would not be desirable to topple a ministry led by a backward caste man if the SSP legislative leader, Ramanand Tiwari, a Brahman, was to become the chief minister.<sup>26</sup> The party moved perilously close to an open split when fourteen SSP legislators in the Bihar legislature from the bloc opposed to the leadership of Ramanand Tiwari deliberately abstained from voting against the Congress (R) coalition ministry in June 1970 on a

motion on an appropriation bill in which the fate of the government was at stake. A split was avoided through the efforts of central party leaders who came to Patna and worked out a compromise by which Karpuri Thakur replaced Ramanand Tiwari as leader of the opposition united legislature party, although Ramanand Tiwari remained as leader of the SSP legislature party. In this way Karpuri Thakur, a man from a backward caste, became the alternative chief minister in case the Congress (R) government were toppled. Although this compromise prevented an open break, the Bihar SSP continued to be divided internally on the questions of alliance partners outside and leadership inside the party, which in turn were related to similar issues within the national executive of the party. However, the issue of alliance partners in Bihar was complicated by the fact that there were several alliance options available and also by the questions concerning caste.

On 18 December 1970 the SSP in Bihar succeeded in bringing down the Congress (R) government and replaced it with an SVD government in which the SSP, with Karpuri Thakur as chief minister, was the dominant partner in alliance with Congress (O), Jana Sangh, Swatantra, and other minor parties. However, the internal debate in the SSP on alliance policy persisted at both the national and state levels of the party and it weakened the position of the SVD government in Bihar. Karpuri Thakur and the SVD government resigned in June, 1971.

Although the events in Bihar described above occurred before the merger of the SSP and PSP, they influenced the negotiations leading up to the merger and they provided a backdrop of resentment among the principal SSP leaders in Bihar, particularly Ramanand Tiwari, Bhola Prasad Singh, and Karpuri Thakur. Some of that resentment emerged in my interviews with Bihar leaders concerning the causes of the split in the Socialist movement in general and its relationship with the internal conflicts in the Bihar SSP.

Although Ramanand Tiwari and Bhola Prasad Singh were the principal spokesmen for competing factional groups in the Bihar SSP, many respondents in Bihar pointed an accusing finger at Karpuri Thakur and assigned to him a principal responsibility for the split in the party at both the 'all-India' and Bihar levels. This struck me as surprising for two reasons. For one thing, in my interviews with Bihar Socialist leaders in 1969, Karpuri Thakur was recognised as the most respected leader of the party by all sides.<sup>27</sup> Second, in most disputes at the central and state levels, Karpuri Thakur cast himself and was cast by others in the role of mediator and peacemaker rather than as a principal protagonist. As the split developed in the SP in 1972 between the Limaye-Fernandes and Raj Narain forces, Karpuri Thakur did not at first join either side, but formed a third force whose stated purpose was to restore unity between the rival camps. In Bihar, Karpuri Thakur had been considered closer to Ramanand Tiwari than to Bhola Prasad Singh because both the former leaders had been in the old PSP together. Yet, ultimately, Ramanand Tiwari and Karpuri Thakur ended up on opposed sides.

Let us turn now to consider the explanations of the split which focused specifically on the role of Karpuri Thakur. One respondent in

Bihar blamed the entire split in the Socialist movement on Karpuri Thakur.

... the entire responsibility for this split goes to Karpuri Thakur because of his personal ambition, self ambition. [Referring to the decision to deny the Rajya Sabha ticket to Raj Narain, this respondent continued as follows.] ... this was decided under the presidentship of Karpuri Thakur. [Yet, when Raj Narain] filed his nomination, ... Karpuri Thakur ... didn't take any drastic action against Raj Narain. Rather he let him loose, free to contest.

This respondent went on to argue that Karpuri Thakur 'worked hard for [the] victory of Raj Narain', attempted to prevent disciplinary action from being taken against Raj Narain, urged its withdrawal when such action was taken anyway, and ultimately joined his forces with those of Raj Narain to serve his own ends. In the meantime, this respondent argued that, although he had 'been playing a very dirty role', Karpuri Thakur actually had been 'misguiding the party workers that he was neutral', whereas all along he intended to join the Raj Narain camp to further his 'personal interest'. In the process, the respondent argued that Karpuri Thakur had 'been instrumental in encouraging the feeling of casteism in the party, especially backwardism, the slogan of backwardism'. This respondent's argument is clear in attributing the causes of the split to personal ambition, particularly to the personal ambition of Karpuri Thakur, who allegedly also manipulated caste symbols in his interest. What is not at all clear are the personal ends which Karpuri Thakur was supposed to be serving by his actions. The only example given in this interview of a matter on which Karpuri Thakur served his own personal ambition was his replacement of Ramanand Tiwari as leader of the SVD in Bihar and his subsequent elevation to the position of chief minister. Yet this event had occurred some time before the 1971-72 merger and split in the Socialist movement. Moreover, as with all events which occurred during this period, there were versions of Karpuri Thakur's role in government formation in 1970 which were more favourable to him. It would take me too far from the events of 1971 and 1972 to explore in detail the whole question of the roles of Karpuri Thakur and Ramanand Tiwari in 1970. However, it is important for our purposes to keep in mind that Ramanand Tiwari and his supporters in the present SP were unanimous in feeling resentful at the role of Karpuri Thakur in the formation of the SVD government in 1970 and attributed his role to personal ambition, but that Karpuri Thakur and others in the SSP disputed this interpretation.

In my interviews concerning Karpuri Thakur's role in 1971 and 1972 I sought explanations for his apparently mediatory stand in relation to the conflict between the Limaye-Fernandes group and the Raj Narain group, for his formation of a third group, the Samatavadi Ektavadi, and for his ultimate decision to join with Raj Narain in re-creating the SSP. On these points all the SP leaders shared the view that, if Karpuri Thakur was not principally to blame for the split as a whole, he at least encouraged Raj Narain by failing to support disciplinary action against him.



His Samatavadi Ektavadi was seen not as an expression of a sincere effort to reunite the Socialist movement but as a means of taking workers away from the SP. However, only one SP leader was able to provide a coherent explanation of how Karpuri Thakur's interests were served by his actions. It is given below in the following excerpt from my notes:

X also commented on the role played by Karpuri Thakur in the split. . . . First, he said that, in the event of a successful effort to bring down the Bihar government and install a non-Congress government again, KT would be the most likely candidate for chief minister. Consequently, he was more inclined to the Raj Narain group and the policy of non-Congressism which would facilitate such an eventuality. This factor is of special importance because of the fact that the fall of the Bihar government is a distinct possibility. A second reason he gave related to caste. X says that the backward castes and Harijans in Bihar, most especially the Yadavs, have gone over to the Raj Narain camp. Consequently, KT feared that, if he went with the SP, he would lose his hold and support among these elements.<sup>28</sup>

This rather sophisticated explanation of Karpuri Thakur's motivations in the 1972 split centres specifically on his personal interest, but it also introduces a rather broad range of considerations which impinge upon those interests. Thus, whatever the cause, whether it is personal ambition or not, this respondent brings us back again to the question of alliance strategies and to social forces, namely, to caste.

My interviews on the split with Bihar Socialist leaders leave no doubt that the question of caste was of greater importance in the Bihar SP and SSP than it was in UP or in the conflict at the central level, a circumstance which conforms well with existing knowledge concerning the role of caste in the dynamics of Bihar politics generally.<sup>29</sup> In some ways, the role of caste in Indian party politics is even more difficult to analyse than are questions concerning ideology and personal ambition. This is so because, whereas the value to be attached to ideology or personal ambition in Indian party politics is relatively unambiguous, there is much ambiguity surrounding the role of caste. In India, ideological motivations in politics carry positive connotations and personal power drives carry negative connotations, but caste motivations may have either positive or negative value. 'Casteism', conceived as the use of one's power or position to favour one's caste fellows to the disadvantage of persons of other castes and in disregard of considerations of merit, is generally disfavoured. However, the policy of preferential treatment for members of 'backward' and disadvantaged castes, even when its effect may be difficult to distinguish from 'casteism' as just defined, may have positive value. In the Socialist movement, particularly in the SSP, such a policy has in fact been adopted and pursued, though not without misgivings among some Socialists.

In the interviews cited above, Karpuri Thakur has been accused of 'casteism' in the pejorative sense. However, Bihar interview respondents from the SSP camp saw the role of caste in the split in a different light. First, they argued that differences on caste policy, particularly concerning the policy of preferential treatment for backward castes, were themselves a causal factor in the split, with the former PSP members especially being

described as opposed to the continuance of the policy in the merged party. Moreover, it was argued that, in Bihar, the importance of this factor in the split could be seen in the way the SP legislature party divided after the split, with most of the upper caste people staying in the SP while most of the backward castes joined the SSP. The second principle point made from the SSP side concerning the role of caste in the split was that the shoe of 'casteism' was in fact on the other foot, that it was not Karpuri Thakur or anyone else in the SSP who had exploited caste, but that the split had been caused by a revival of Brahmanism in the Socialist movement, with the Brahmans S. M. Joshi, N. G. Goray, Madhu Dandavate, Madhu Limaye, and Ramanand Tiwari banding together. Needless to say, this charge was denied from the SP side.

While the charges and counter-charges concerning the role of caste in the Bihar split and the nature of the division in the legislature groups leave no doubt that caste was a factor of prominence in the split in Bihar, it is not self-evident that caste was a 'causal' factor or that Karpuri Thakur was motivated by 'casteism' in his ultimate decision to join with the SSP. It is not self-evident because there is often discontinuity in Indian party politics between the issues in dispute in leadership conflicts and the bases upon which support is mobilized by contending leaders. Such discontinuity is a manifestation of the impact on party politics of India's divergent 'idioms' or 'cultures', modern and traditional, elite and mass.<sup>30</sup> In party politics, it means that leaders in conflict may struggle with each other over issues of principle and power, while their hold over their followers is based upon ties of caste, kinship, or personal relationship. Therefore, the 'cause' or precipitant of a conflict or party split may be one thing, its structural basis may be something else.

The existence of discontinuity between inter-leader relationships and leader-follower relationships makes it difficult to specify precisely the role of social forces in leadership conflicts and to decide in particular cases what are primary and what secondary factors. In the split in the Bihar Socialist movement, the information available from the published record and from interviews suggests that the issue of alliance strategy and power was the precipitating factor in the split in Bihar, as it was in UP and at the central level, and that caste provided the structural basis for the conflict. However, at critical points in the development of the conflict in Bihar, the underlying structural basis of the conflict became primary, defined the basis of the conflict, and limited the freedom of action of leaders.

Two incidents in the course of the internal conflict in the Bihar Socialist movement illustrate this point. The first incident occurred even before the merger between the SSP and the PSP, but it illustrates the point so well and is so clearly related to later developments that it must be discussed here. It concerns the conflict already mentioned concerning alliance strategy for the SSP in 1970, when Bhola Prasad Singh and Ramanand Tiwari pursued alternative alliance partners in the attempts to form united front governments in Bihar in February and then again in December. Ultimately, the anti-Congress strategy of the Bhola Prasad Singh wing, which favoured alliance with Congress (O), Swatantra, and

Jana Sangh, prevailed, Ramanand Tiwari resigned the leadership of the united legislature party, and Karpuri Thakur became the chief minister in a united front government. Although the issues in dispute throughout were articulated in terms of alliance partners, at one point Bhola Prasad Singh stated publicly that Ramanand Tiwari, a Brahman, would not be an appropriate replacement as chief minister for the Congress (R) chief minister at the time, who was himself from a backward caste. Supporters of Bhola Prasad Singh have attempted to explain away this statement as merely reflecting his anger, which was allegedly actually caused by Ramanand Tiwari's resignation from the SVD leadership on the issue of alliance strategy and the consequent difficulties faced by the SSP in forming a government. However, it seems to me that this is a clear case in which the structural basis of a conflict revealed itself and became a primary determining factor in its outcome, since Karpuri Thakur, a backward caste leader, did in fact replace Ramanand Tiwari as SVD leader and did become chief minister of Bihar.

The second incident concerns the ultimate decision of Karpuri Thakur to join with the SSP rather than with the SP or rather than remain with his own third force, the Samatavadi Ektavadi. His detractors argue that the two incidents are connected, that Karpuri Thakur became chief minister through the manipulation of caste sentiment and joined the SSP in December 1972 also because of caste ties. Karpuri Thakur and his supporters, however, argue to the contrary that he accepted the chief ministership reluctantly and only to aid in the resolution of the inner party controversy and that his decision to merge with the Raj Narain forces had nothing to do with caste. In fact, it is argued that Karpuri Thakur has followed a consistent political line throughout his participation in the Socialist movement of promoting Socialist unity and avoiding splits. In support of this argument, it is noted that he did not go out of the PSP when the followers of Lohia split the party in 1954, that he joined the SSP during the 1964 merger and did not leave the SSP when a group of former PSP leaders split from the party in 1965, and that he made every effort to bring together the divided Socialist groups in 1972. His decision to join forces with the Raj Narain camp in December 1972 came, it is argued, because the SP forces of Limaye and Fernandes refused to attend the Socialist unity conference which he convened in Patna in December 1972. While Karpuri Thakur's actions do reveal him to have pursued consistently the goal of Socialist unity, it is also clear that his actions in pursuit of that goal in 1972 were different from his actions in 1954 and in 1965. On those occasions, he refused to go out of the PSP and the SSP, respectively, with those who were splitting from the party. In 1972, however, despite his efforts for unity, he merged his forces with a group of splitters. By calling a unity conference, which the SP leaders failed to attend, he created a situation in which those who failed to attend his conference appeared to be opposed to Socialist unity. Karpuri Thakur, however, could in good conscience and consistently with his proclaimed principles join forces with Raj Narain, in the camp where his political career would best be pursued and in which the bulk of the backward castes had aligned. In this way, Karpuri Thakur succeeded in maintaining

his ties with the social (caste) forces on which his political future depended without compromising his pursuit of the goal of Socialist unity. My interpretation of the significance of Karpuri Thakur's actions, therefore, is that he scrupulously avoided in fact the manipulation of caste symbols, that he pursued consistently the goal of Socialist unity, but that he could not have made any other choice but to follow his social base. Therefore, Karpuri Thakur's decision represents a case where the structural basis of a conflict limited the freedom of action of a leader. Within the limits imposed by the need to remain with his social base, Karpuri Thakur pursued a consistent political line, with great skill. He even succeeded in placing the onus for the split in the Socialist movement on the SP leaders who did not attend his unity conference rather than on himself and Raj Narain. In contrast to Bholu Prasad Singh, whose caste orientation was revealed in his opposition to Ramanand Tiwari's elevation to the chief ministership of Bihar, Karpuri Thakur never made a public statement which could be described as 'casteist'. It is the difference between a truly skilful political leader and the less skilful that the former succeeds in pursuing simultaneously his own advantage while maintaining a consistent political line whereas the latter type of leader either freezes himself into rigid ideological positions or reveals his opportunism. The rigid ideologue rarely achieves power at all, the opportunist may achieve power, but will sooner or later lose the popular support base necessary to remain in power.

## V

The following conclusions are suggested by the foregoing analysis of the 1971-72 merger and split in the Socialist movement.

Leadership conflict and leader-follower relationships were closely interconnected in both the merger of August 1971 and the split of December 1972. Indian Socialist leaders, like all political leaders everywhere, must maintain contact with their regional and social bases and must sometimes follow rather than lead the forces they ostensibly command. However, the course of the merger and split in the Indian Socialist movement does not confirm the general proposition that the rank and file provide the principal pressures for splits and have the least enthusiasm to merge. Although Karpuri Thakur's freedom of action was limited by the inclinations of his social base to one side in the dispute, Raj Narain was impelled by rank and file pressure towards a merger he did not want and ultimately led his regional (UP) group out of the party to serve both his own interests and those of his regional following.

Leadership conflict in the Indian Socialist movement was not merely conflict among *prima donnas* over either empty 'ideological abstractions' or personal dislikes. The central issues concerned power—power in the party and power in government. The irony of the failure of the Indian Socialist movement is that it has not disintegrated because it could not achieve power, but because its leaders could not agree on the appropriate tactics to achieve power when it became available.

Personal ambition, principle, and social forces were also involved in the split. Personal ambitions, of course, are always involved in power

struggles. The only real question here is whether politicians reveal themselves as opportunists and discredit their causes by openly tying their personal advancement to the issues in dispute. The skilful politician avoids placing himself or being placed in such a position. Raj Narain revealed himself not so much as an opportunist, but as a less skilful politician than his rivals, who succeeded in cornering him in a power struggle in the party by denying him a nomination to contest a Rajya Sabha seat. Contrast Raj Narain's lack of skill with Karpuri Thakur's consummate ability to turn the tables on his rivals. Whereas Raj Narain could not resist an opportunity to achieve power, Karpuri Thakur had the strength to resign from a position of power and, thereby, to avoid personal contamination in the dispute. And whereas Raj Narain, though he was in fact suspended from the party, was made to appear as a splitter, Karpuri Thakur, who left the SP for the SSP on his own accord, followed a political tactic which made it appear that it was the Limaye-Fernandes group that opposed Socialist unity.

Principles and policy issues also were involved in this split, but not as causal or precipitating factors. While many respondents agreed that genuine differences on issues of policy concerning language, caste, and the Twenty-Fourth Amendment Bill separated the opposing sides, hardly any respondents considered these issues sufficient causes for the split. To say that policy issues were not responsible for the split is not to say that the differences between the two sides were not genuine or significant. They were, but they did not precipitate the split.

The kinds of issues which precipitate splits are not issues of policy, but issues of immediate tactics for achieving power, particularly when the adoption of one set of tactics will benefit one group while denying power to another group. The issue of alliance policy has for long been just such an issue, in both the Socialist and Communist movements in India. It has been a particularly divisive factor for opposition parties in India because of the great diversity of state party systems and social cleavages within each state. A tactic which offers the prospect of power to one state party unit may deny it to another. The policy of left alliance offered a potential route to power for the Socialists in Bihar but not in UP. Therefore, it was Raj Narain and the UP unit of the SP which most strongly opposed the shift from the tactic of non-Congressism to one of Left alliance only. The Bihar party divided internally because there were several coalition possibilities in the fragmented multi-party system of that state.

Finally, social forces also were involved in the Socialist split, but again not as causal factors but as structuring factors. The split in Bihar was not precipitated by caste conflict. It was precipitated by the same issue of alliance policy, but structured in terms of caste groupings. That is to say that there is nothing about the logic of caste conflict in Bihar which required the backward castes to favour the policy of non-Congressism and the elite castes to favour the policy of left alliances only. The differences on alliance policy existed independently of the caste conflict in Bihar, but support was mobilised by the rival leaders along caste lines. Karpuri Thakur's problem was that the backward castes had already

aligned with one side in the dispute before he made his final moves. The dilemma he faced was how to remain consistent with his long-proclaimed goal of Socialist unity without losing contact with his social base. He succeeded in overcoming the dilemma by forcing the SP leaders to make the choice for or against Socialist unity, thereby getting off the hook himself.

The relationship between leadership conflict and social forces in the Socialist party split illustrates a significant feature of Indian politics generally, namely, the existence of discontinuity between the norms and goals of leaders and those of their followers, between public issues and the bases on which support is mobilised in politics. Indian Socialist leaders speak in the modern idiom of planning and economic policy. When they speak in public on preferential treatment for backward castes, they are careful to avoid expressions of caste prejudice. However, when they mobilise support, they speak in the 'traditional' or 'mass' idiom, in this case of backward caste interests in relation to elite caste interests. Opportunist leaders and those who are less skilful in speaking the two idioms will ultimately be revealed as mere manipulators of caste prejudice for personal advantage. The more skilful leaders will maintain the delicate balance between the normative language appropriate for public discourse and the pragmatic idiom used to mobilise support.<sup>31</sup>

What kind of model of conflict, then, is most relevant to the analysis of party splits in India? From what has been said already, it is clear that neither ideological models nor models based upon social cleavages can predict a phenomenon such as a party split. The factional model remains the most useful one, but it requires some modification to fit this type of case. The predominant model of the structure of factions and factional competition in Indian politics stresses their personalistic, non-ideological basis, fluidity of the conflicts and alignments, the combination of affective and instrumental ties in the relationship between leader and follower, and the diversity of social and economic origins of faction supporters. This model was derived from observations of village conflict and intra-party conflict in the Congress organisation in the Indian states, that is, in arenas where conflict does not take place through public debate and periodic elections, but through private plotting and irregular confrontations. When conflict becomes public and ritualised, that is, when it becomes necessary to justify one's actions before an audience of non-participants, the form of the conflict changes. For example, when a faction defects from one party to form a new party, such a public act requires justification. In non-ideological parties such as the Congress, the justification usually takes the form of a charge of corruption against one's opponents. A corruption charge, of course, is itself a highly personal issue quite consonant with the factional conflict model. More elaborate justifications are sometimes given in such situations, but close examination usually reveals them to be either highly vague and diffuse or trivial in nature. In ideological parties, the constraints upon merely factional behaviour are more severe. Leaders in antagonistic conflict in such parties will not be taken seriously unless they can articulate a meaningful and consistent political line. If the ideological and structural constraints on

the mere pursuit of personal goals are rigid enough and persist for long enough, they may impose sufficient discipline upon participants so that personal ambitions become sublimated and hidden from public view.

The 'pure' factional model of conflict, therefore, becomes less appropriate in analysing parties with elaborate and systematic ideologies and strong internal discipline and in contexts involving ritualised public activities. In all political conflict situations, however, the stakes of the struggle are invariably political power. What varies is not the content of the struggle but the normative and institutional restraints upon it and the forms through which it is disciplined, structured, and ritualised.<sup>32</sup> Leadership conflict in the Socialist movement has been only partially disciplined by normative restraints and hardly at all by institutional restraints. Socialist ideology in India has not been very elaborate or highly formalised. Loyalties of members have been contingent and tied to specific appeals rather than to Marxist ideology in general. The organisational structures of the parties have been decentralised and weakly articulated.<sup>33</sup> In such parties, the normative cover concealing personal struggles for power is usually rather thin. Such parties also, whose leaders are unwilling or unable to pursue power relentlessly and distribute patronage liberally with minimal regard to principle and whose organisational structure and ideological appeals do not impose severe constraints upon the membership, face the most difficult problems of institutionalisation. They may rise and fall in the interstices between the big parties of patronage and the better organised parties, but they offer no long-term prospects for themselves or for their supporters of playing a major role in bringing about political or social change.

#### NOTES

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1. See, for example, Myron Weiner, *Party Politics in India: The Development of a Multi-Party System* (Princeton NJ, 1957) and Paul R. Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State: The Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh* (Berkeley, 1965).

2. Weiner, *op. cit.*, esp. 114 and 229.

3. Lewis P. Fickett, Jr, 'The Praja Socialist Party of India—1952-1972: A Final Assessment', 13 *Asian Survey* (1973), 829.

4. See Brass, *op. cit.*, esp. 237-8 and Norman K. Nicholson, 'The Factional Model and the Study of Politics', 5 *Comparative Political Studies* (1972), 291-314.

5. A provocative example of such a model is Mary C. Carras, *The Dynamics of Indian Political Factions: A Study of District Councils in the State of Maharashtra* (Cambridge, 1972). See also the critique of the Carras thesis by Donald B. Rosenthal, 'Sources of District Congress Factionalism in Maharashtra', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 19 August 1972, 1725-46.

6. For a well-balanced application of a caste model of political behavior, see Harry W. Blair, 'Caste, Politics and Democracy in Bihar State, India: The Elections of 1967', (unpublished PhD dissertation, Duke University, 1969).

7. Weiner, *op. cit.*, chaps. 2, 5.

8. A portion of the discussion in this section is derived from Paul R. Brass and Marcus F. Franda (eds), *Radical Politics in South Asia* (Cambridge, Mass, 1973), 31-2.

9. *18 Indian Recorder & Digest*, No 5 (May 1971), 11 and No 6 (June 1971), 11. The internal divisions on alliance policy in the Socialist movement were analysed also in the weekly news magazines; see especially the issues of *Mainstream* and *Link* during this period.

10. *18 Indian Recorder & Digest*, Nos 7 & 8 (July-August 1971), 18-19.

11. *Ibid.*, No 9 (September 1971), 14.

12. *Ibid.*, No 12 (December 1971), 22.

13. *Ibid.*, No 11 (November 1971), 13; see also National Conference of the Socialist Party, Bulandshahar (UP), January 5-8 1972, *General Secretary's Report* (Delhi, 1972), 6.

14. *18 Indian Recorder & Digest*, Nos 4 & 5 (April-May 1972), 23-4.

15. *Ibid.*, No 6 (June 1972), 16, 21.

16. *Ibid.*, 19, No 1 (January 1973), 13-14.

17. *1 Socialist Party Bulletin*, Nos 4-5 (April-May 1972), 2-4, 6 and No 12 (January 1973), 2, 7.

18. From my notes of an untaped interview in New Delhi on 19 May 1973.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. From my notes of an untaped interview in New Delhi on 25 May 1973.

22. From my notes of an untaped interview in New Delhi on 17 July 1973.

23. Taped interview in New Delhi on 1 August 1973.

24. Taped interview in Patna on 9 May 1973.

25. For brief biographical sketches of these three leaders, see Paul R. Brass, 'Radical Parties of the Left in Bihar: A Comparison of the SSP and the CPI', in Brass and Franda, *op. cit.*, 342-5.

26. The information in this and the following paragraphs has been adapted from *ibid.*, 363-4.

27. *Ibid.*, 343.

28. From my notes of an untaped interview in New Delhi on 25 May 1973.

29. See especially Blair, *op. cit.*

30. Cf. W. H. Morris-Jones, *The Government and Politics of India* (London, 1971), chap. ii; and Myron Weiner, 'India's Two Political Cultures', in *Political Change in South Asia* (Calcutta, 1963), chap. ii.

31. Cf. F. G. Bailey's discussion of normative and pragmatic rules in politics in *Stratagems and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics* (Oxford, 1969), 4-7. Discontinuity between public norms and the private appeals required to mobilise support successfully is not, of course, unique to the Indian political system. My colleague, Daniel Lev, pointed out here that a similar discontinuity has been common in the Republican and Democratic parties in the United States on the issue of integration where the normative rules of American public life require most leaders of both parties to speak publicly in favour of integration, which may conflict with their pragmatic appeals for votes from groups opposed to integration.

32. This point is made in Nicholson, *op. cit.* However, I do not agree with his argument that factional conflict arises in conditions of 'social decay' (304). Rather, I would argue that the factional conflict model is a universal model of conflict which fits certain types of situations that may arise even without social disorganisation.

33. In all these respects, the Socialist parties differ from the Communist parties in India, which impose more severe restraints on factional conflicts, but do not prevent them. See Brass, 'Radical Parties of the Left in Bihar', 357-66.