



Bjp: Electoral Performance, Governance and Ideological Issues

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Abstract

The past decade has seen many changes in party politics of India in which the focal point of all these changes can be considered a right-wing political party established in India after independence, which is now the world's largest political party. BJP won the general elections in 2014 and emerged as a political party that got a clear majority in Lok Sabha after almost 30 years. In 2014 Lok Sabha elections, BJP choose Narendra Modi as its PM candidate, who made modern and developed India the basis of election campaign by giving the slogan 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas' keeping the Gujrat model in front of the whole country, which was a new experiment other than BJP's Hindutva ideology.

BJP freed the country from policy paralysis since the time of coalition governments. In its first term BJP adopted good governance policies such as; Make in India, Digital India, Jan-Dhan Yojna, Smart Cities Mission along with different economic reforms. Party also took a big step to remove Planning Commission and established NITI Aayog on its place, which is more cooperative and federal than former. In the presented paper, where and how much contribution of leadership and organisation in BJP's election performance; will be analysed. The reason for the continuous good performance of BJP in the elections is not only due to the presence of an experienced leader, but also the party's organisation at the grassroots level is very strong.

This paper also aims to find out what is the reason that despite the excellent performance at the national level, the performance of the BJP at the state level has not been as good in the last few years. BJP has adopted pro-business policies in place of more socialist policies which has been criticized by various parties. This paper will try to find out what has been the effect of these pro-business policies of BJP on the good governance and the economy of India and what can be advantage and disadvantage of such schemes in the future. Critics believe that BJP is a dominating party and its core competence is hard-core Hindutva ideology, but it would not be wrong to say that BJP has left his core competence behind and established itself as a nationalist party. Due to which a large section of the Indian public remains a supporter of BJP and Prime Minister Modi, despite various criticisms.

Keywords: BJP, Electoral Performance, Governance, NITI Aayog, Ideology

I. Introduction

The year 2014 marked the beginning of a new phase of party politics in India, when for the first time since 1984 a single political party got an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. Strong leadership of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah and the ability to convert vote into seats has brought BJP to the centre stage of Indian politics. With the improvement in BJP's vote share since the 90's it seemed that the Indian voter had found an alternative of Congress at the national level. However, in the elections of 2004 & 2009 the BJP could not perform well. But in 2014, Congress did not have any strong candidate for PM, as well as the impact of recession on the economy had created a wave against the party. BJP's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi had done a great job by filling the vacuum created by the collapse of Congress. The double whammy of

stagflation (slow growth plus rising prices) and corruption kept the UPA of balance and allowed the BJP to shift the focus away from Hindu nationalism toward economic development and good governance.

Bjp has emerged as a big and successful political party at national and international level in the last decade. It is necessary to know how a political party which has considered predominantly right-wing emerged as the single largest party in a country with a large and diverse population like India and how it changed its core competence so that it could perform better in the elections and gain more public support.

II. Electoral Performance of BJP

Bhartiya Janata Party participated its first general election in 1984, in which it won 2 seats in Lok Sabha and its vote share was 7 %. Exactly 30 years later, in the 2014 general elections, the BJP emerged as the single largest party, winning 282 seats with a vote share of 31.34%. it is worth noting that even in 2019 general election the BJP showed a better performance than before by winning 302 seats with 37.7% vote share, while the vote share of BJP alliance NDA was 44.84%. BJP secured nearly 50% and above vote share in 15 States and Union Territories. The number goes up to 17 for NDA. If we look at the performance of party at the state level, in the year 2013 BJP was ruling in five states- Gujrat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Goa and was sharing power with ally JD(U) in Bihar and Shiromani Akali Dal in Panjab. Its political fortunes have changed dramatically since then. By May 2018, the BJP either on its own strength or with its alliance partners, was ruling in 21 of the 31 states and UT's covering 70% of the country's population and 76% of the area. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) headed by BJP is now governing 17 states across the country, covering 44% of India's territory and 49.6% of its population.

Learning from the 2004 and 2009 general elections BJP fine-tuned its social engineering to suit the changing voter base. The main vote bank of the bjp has been the upper caste Brahmin community, but in 2014 and 2019 elections BJP tried to woo the lower caste Hindu community as well. As a result of witch there was a massive change in the vote share of bjp from different social communities- from 19% in 1996 to 44% in 2019 among the OBC's, from 14% to 34% among the SC's and from 21% to 44% among the ST's (Suri 2019: 236). Bjp also gain Muslim votes from 2% in 1996 to 8% in 2014 and same for 2019.

Table 1: Change in BJP's Performance and vote share from 2009 to 2019 General Elections

States/UT	Total seats		Seats won by BJP		Poll %	
	2009	2019	2009	2019	2009	2019
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1	1	1	0	44.21	0
Andhra Pradesh	42	25	0	0	0	0
Arunachal Pradesh	2	2	0	2	0	58.9
Assam	14	14	4	9	16.21	36.41
Bihar	40	40	12	17	13.93	24.06
Chandigarh	1	1	0	1	0	51.12
Chhattisgarh	11	11	10	9	45.02	51.44
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1	1	1	0	46.43	0
Daman & Diu	1	1	1	1	65.49	43.73
Goa	2	2	1	1	44.78	51.94
Gujarat	26	26	15	26	46.52	63.08
Haryana	10	10	0	10	0	58.21
Himachal Pradesh	4	4	3	4	49.58	69.71
Jammu & Kashmir	6	6	0	3	0	46.68
Jharkhand	14	14	8	11	27.53	51.61
Karnataka	28	28	19	25	41.63	51.75
Kerala	20	20	0	0	0	0
Lakshadweep	1	1	0	0	0	0
Madhya Pradesh	29	29	16	28	43.45	58.54
Maharashtra	48	48	9	23	18.17	27.84
Manipur	2	2	0	1	0	34.33
Meghalaya	2	2	0	0	0	0
Mizoram	1	1	0	0	0	0
Nagaland	1	1	0	0	0	0

NCT OF Delhi	7	7	0	7	0	56.86
Odisha	21	21	0	8	0	38.88
Puducherry	1	1	0	0	0	0
Punjab	13	13	1	2	10.06	9.74
Rajasthan	25	25	4	24	36.57	59.07
Sikkim	1	1	0	0	0	0
Tamil Nadu	39	39	0	0	0	0
Telangana	*	17	0	4	0	19.65
Tripura	2	2	0	2	0	49.56
Uttar Pradesh	80	80	10	62	17.5	49.98
Uttarakhand	5	5	0	5	0	61.66
West Bengal	42	42	1	18	6.14	40.64
TOTAL	543	543				

There is more than one factor behind BJP's victory in 2014 and 2019 lok sabha election and its breadth of vote share. We can categorise these factors as external and internal factors. Anti-incumbency waves against Congress, Lack of strong leadership in Congress, Corruption cases, failure of regional parties to build a stable government were external factors and popularity of leadership, change in election strategy, powerful leadership and organization, social media campaign were internal factors for the rise of bjp as a dominant party. The emergence of bjp as a dominant party were started after 2014 lok sabha elections, at that time Congress coalition had been in power for 10 years. The Indian economy was at the peak of its post-independence growth under the government led by Manmohan Singh, but the effects of the recession of 2008 became visible in the second term of the UPA government, when India's GDP growth rate declined from 8% to 4%. Along with this widespread allegations pf corruption were levelled against the Congress Government. In its election campaign the bjp accused the congress of promotion nepotism. During the congress regime, either both the post of prime minister and party president remained in the hands of the same person or there was a tradition of overpowering the decisions of PM by the party president. All these factors fuelled the anti-incumbency wave against the ruling party. As years passed Congress became a playground for political entrepreneurs, functions and willy provincial kshatras, in their unceasing pursuit of power and wealth flaunting loyalty to the high command (K.C. Suri).

III. Importance of leadership

If we look at the perspective of the previous general elections of India then it has been very necessary to have a strong leadership to win the elections, especially last four general elections have been mainly fought between two major alliances- NDA which is led by BJP and UPA led by Congress. In these elections both the parties presented their prime ministerial candidate as the main face of the electorate. There is a tradition of giving a face to political parties for the elections in India. Elections were fought and won on the basis of some prominent faces as Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Sonia Gandhi, Narendra Modi. Modi has an important contribution in BJP's victorious journey. In September 2013, bjp declared Narendra Damodardas Modi as its prime ministerial candidate for 14th lok sabha elections. Since then he has been on the centre stage of Indian Politics. Modi has transformed bjp into the form of a vote pulling machine. In the last 50 days of the election campaign in 2014, Modi gave speeches or rallied in 185 constituencies and out of them 153 candidates won.

Here the question arises that why is Narendra Modi so famous among the Indian people and how he managed to convert his fame into votes. There can be three possible answers to this question. First, he does not come from a strong political family, rather he belongs to a lower middle class family. He is not a high class Brahmin or a janedhari. His image is similar to a normal Indian citizen. Second, he is a less family-man and more social person from the very beginning. When a person enjoys the pleasures of life he renounces the life of a householder and dedicated his life to the Sangh Parivar. Although, it has been criticised by opponents, but he redeemed his ascetic image very well. Third, he targeted every social community of India. He did not choose only Hindutva politics, but presented development and corruption as the main issue of the election. He was elected for the Chief Minister of Gujrat for four times. So, when he talked about economic and structural development of India, voters saw the Gujrat model as an example of his success.

We can say that Modi is not a miracle man, it is his social background, political journey and the art of social engineering that made him the key to BJP's success. "In 2019, about half of the people wanted Modi as the

Prime Minister. Close to one third of those who voted for bjp said that their voting preferences would have changed if Modi was not the Prime Ministerial candidate.”

IV. The organisation

We all know that for organisational success leadership is as more important as the organisation itself. After 2014 elections BJP made a lot of changes in its organizational structure. The party adopted mass call method, simplifying its membership process. Seeing the popularity of bjp people started competing for its membership and by 2015 Bhartiya Janata Party became the largest political party in India and the world. In 2019 J.P. Nadda told in one of his interview that the membership of bjp has reached near 18 crores.

The party identified all castes and sub-castes which were outside in the power structure, and provided leadership to their members in order to reach out to the lowest strata of society. The party also reaches out to the tribal, which benefitted in it the assembly elections. ‘It formed an alliance with tribal groups that have been demanding separate statehood in Tripura and won a landslide victory in 2018’ (Ramaseshan, 2018). ‘The bjp also reaped dividends from the sustained work of RSS- backed organisations in remote tribal areas over several decades such as; Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, Ekal Vidyalayas, Sevashram and Seva Bharati’ (Kashyap, 2017).

While expanding its organisational structure, the party built different fronts from different communities such as; Kisan Morcha, Mahila Morcha, SC Morcha, Yuva Morcha, ST Morcha, OBC Morcha, Minority Morcha. BJP organisation has one President, 12 Vice-Presidents, 9 General Secretaries, 13 National Secretaries and more than 400 National Executive Members (Bharatiya Janata Party, n.d.). The bjp adopted the system of Panna Pramukh, in which a worker has given the task of making voters aware for voting on each page of the voter list of each constituency and making arrangements to take them to the polling station.

The party also changed the way of making decisions. The pairing of Amit Shah and Narendra Modi ushered centralized decision-making in the bjp, based on ‘*ek chalak anuvartitva*’ (follow one leader) principle established by former RSS chief Hedgewar. The Modi-Shah duo gave preference to new and young faces for leadership in different states, side-lined old experienced faces, most of them were handpicked by the PM himself. Some examples are Manohar Lal Khattar in Haryana, Devendra Fadnavis in Maharashtra, Raghubar Das in Jharkhand, Biplab Dasgupta in Tripura. BJP leadership proved itself in various state assembly elections (MISRA, 2018).

V. Governance

Bjp adopted good governance, ending the problem of policy paralysis of Congress tenure. The BJP’s definition of good governance is an administration where even the weakest and the most vulnerable sections of society have an equal stake in charting the country’s growth (Kashyap, 2017). BJP government made many policies related to good governance in order to make government more responsible and the administration more transparent. Government abolished the centralized planning commission, and established NITI Ayog in 2015 which is more cooperative institution. The government believes that world economy is undergoing massive changes, hence the five year plans are no longer effective. If India has to compete with big economies of the world then its policies will have to be changes. For this reason; short, medium and long term plans are being prepared by NITI Ayog by ending five year plans. Digital India to maintain the transparency of government, Make in India to make the economy self-reliant, Smart Cities plan for infrastructure development and schemes related to Antyodaya are symbols of BJP’s good governance. In 8 years of its rule bjp made many schemes in the areas of health care, agriculture, farmer welfare, women welfare, skill development etc.

Health care: -

Ayushman Bharat Yojna or Healthy India was the part of national health policy 2017, in order to achieve the vision of universal health coverage. This initiative comprises two components, first one is establishments of health and wellness centres and second one is PM-JAY (Prime Minister Jan Arogya Yojna) As of April 2021, ~75,532 Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs) were operational across the country and 1.5 crore people were benefitted under PM-JAY (Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana | IBEF, 2018) Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojna(PMBJP) was launched in 2008 with an objective of making quality generic medicines available at affordable prices to all. As on October 2022 total 8819 Janaushadhi Kendras are functional across the country (Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMVJP), n.d.). Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a Centrally Sponsored DBT scheme with the cash incentive of ₹5000/- (in three instalments) being provided directly in the bank/post office

account of Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, n.d.) Mission Indradhanush was launched by the government of India in 2014 to ensure full immunization coverage for children up to two years and pregnant women. There were 387 medical colleges in India in 2014 which increased to 596 in the last 8 years with a growth of 54%. There were only 7 AIIMS in the country, which now increased to 22. The government has started vaccination in India from January 2021 to deal with the Global pandemic COVID-19. Till now 90% of India's population has got at least one vaccine dose and booster dose had been provided to 80% people.

Women welfare: -

Bjp has launched several women empowerment schemes. Beti bachao beti padhao was launched for Prevention of gender biased sex selective elimination, ensuring survival & protection of the girl child, Ensuring education and participation of the girl child. Ujjawala is a comprehensive scheme for prevention of trafficking and rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation (ministry of women and child development , 2015). Prime Minister office shared details of 8 years of women empowerment in June 2022, according to that for the first time India has higher women sex ratio with 1020 women on per 1000 men. Government has started more than 2.7 crore Sukanya Samridhi accounts. PM Awas yojna has 68% women beneficiaries. Tripal talaq was abolished in 2019 for the welfare of Muslim women. PM Mudra Yojna and Startup India programmes also contributing to financially empowering Indian women.

Skill development programmes: -

In order to empower the youth, the bjp government has started different Skill development programmes, through which youth can learn different types of skills and become self-independent. Under this initiative several schemes were launched for skill development and employment of the youth. For the first time since India's independence, a Ministry for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has been formed to focus on enhancing employability of the youth through skill development. Skill India offers courses across 40 sectors in the country which are aligned to the standards recognised by both, the industry and the government under the National Skill Qualification Framework. So far more than 50 lakhs people have been certified and formally recognised under the programs (PMO, 2015). Some skill development schemes and initiatives are- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna (PMKVY), Employability Enhancement Training Programme (EETP), Rojgar Mela, Capacity Building Scheme - Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKK), National Employability Enhancement Mission (NEEM), Skill Assessment Matrix for Vocational Advancement of Youth (SAMVAY), AICTE-Startup Policy, Leadership Development programmes etc.

VI. Ideological issues

The roots of the bjp traced back to Jan Sangh as founded by Shyama Prasad Mukharjee in 1951. Integral Humnaism of Deen Dayal Upadhyay was the official Ideology of Jan Sangh, but in practice Jan Sangh was a nationalist party that originated as a political wing of rashtriy sawayamsevak sangh, a predominantly Hindu nationalist organisation. The Janta Party was formed from Jan Sangh in 1977 and the Bhartiya Janta Party in 1980 from Janta party. Bjp was considered a right wing party at the time of its inception. Before 1991 elections L.K. Adwani started Ram Rath Yatra, which benefited bjp in the general elections. The party doubled its vote share from the previous elections and emerged as the second largest party at the centre after the congress. Bjp got huge support of rural masses from the Ram Janmbhumi movement. At that time BJP's core competence was Hindutva ideology and its target vote bank were Hindu Brahmin class, but in last one decade bjp has aimed every class and community of India. In 2014 and 2019 general elections, the party garnered votes from every part of social strata, leading to believe that the bjp is poised to become a centrist party. In the present context the question arises that would it be right to consider bjp as a centrist party? Has bjp completely abandoned its Hindu Nationalist Ideology? There are two approaches to Hindu nationalism in India. One of the holds that Hindutva is related to Indian culture and is not attached to any community. This approach associates Hindutva with Indianness and not with communism. Supporters of second approach believes that Hindu nationalism is another name of bigotry, under the guise of this word, minority rights are being suppressed and this means to state that India belongs only to Hindus.

After winning the 2012 Gujrat elections Narendra Modi talked about governance, economy, development and employment in a speech at Delhi College in February 2013. Along with this he also gave the slogan of 'Congress Mukta Bharat' (Congress free India). By Congress Mukta Bharat, he meant freedom from dynastic politics and corruption, but with this slogan showed hope to Hindu vote bank that minority appeasement

politics in the name of secularism would end under the bjp rule. Modi, the BJP's PM candidate for 2014 elections, adopted a multi-layered strategy, where he should have talked about development; he talked about development, where he had to talk about Hindutva; he talked about Hindutva. Connecting to backward class he described himself as a victim of disadvantage. He addressed different constituencies differently. Since 2014 bjp has made its election strategy understanding the mood of Indian voters.

Bjp hasn't left its core competence Hindutva ideology behind, adding lessons related to Indian culture and Hindutva in text books, changes in the name of cities and tourist places, beautification of temples are signs of bjp being associated with Hindutva Ideology. It can be said that bjp had tried to strike a balance between national development and Hindutva. The party made plans like Digital India, Aatmnirbhar Bharat, Startup Scheme and gave equal importance to the construction of Kashi Vishwanath Corridor and Ram Mandir. It ended social evils like Triple Talaq and also took tough decisions like demonetisation and lockdown. Bjp has combined national development with Hindutva.

Conclusion

BJP has the support of a large section of the Indian voters, it is ruling as a dominant party. Though decisions are easily taken by the top leadership. Acts like CAA or Kisan bill causes public anger and violence. For democratic countries, it has been believed that political parties rise and fall with time. One party dominance for a long time can be a threat to the democratic system. Due to effective presence of regional parties in the party politics of India, it is not easy for a single party to be dominant. Political parties compete more than one level to win the elections. It has not been easy to fulfil the wishes of everyone in a diverse country like India. In such a situation, if bjp got absolute majority in the last two general elections and is still performing well in state and local body elections apart from sporadic exceptions, then the main reason for this has been the electoral strategy of bjp, in which elections are fought considering the equations of each class, community, caste and sub-caste. BJP has given space to all the sections of the society irrespective of caste and creed that can lead to harmonious society. As president Droupadi Murmu said, "India has a government which is stable, fearless, decisive and working with lofty ambitions."

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