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TRENDS OF MARGIN OF VICTORY OF THE BJP IN INDIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS (1996-1998)

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Abstract: The trends and patterns of margin of victory for the BJP in Indian parliamentary elections (1996-1998) studied which examines the geographical spread of the party. The constituency-wise analysis of the margin of victory for the BJP reveals that the main area of strength of the party was North India in general and Hindi Speaking Heartland in particular. The party performed appreciably well in the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka. Recently the party also has shown its presence in North-Eastern States and in Orissa. Gujarat has emerged as the key state for the party in these parliamentary elections.

Keyword: Victory, Parliamentary, Elections, geographical.

INTRODUCTION:

Many Indian political parties claiming to uphold religious nationalism regarding the Hindu, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is the most significant one in the contemporary political scene in context to the Hindu nationalism. As a concept, Hindu nationalism is centuries old but the way it has been linked with politics is a new phenomenon in the Indian politics. Formed in 1915, the Hindu Mahasabha was the first national political party with a Hindu nationalist ideology. The Hindu nationalist ideas also existed within the Indian National Congress but were "largely developed outside it".

The formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925 marked the beginning of a broad movement with cultural, religious and political aims. After the independence, the movement strengthened itself within the political arena by supporting the formation of a new political party named the "Bharatiya Jana Sangh" (BJS). Until 1977, when the BJS was merged into the Janata Party, its political agenda was "mainly on religious and cultural issues like cow protection and the introduction of Hindi as a national language. Despite its nationalist ideology, it was never successful outside its traditional stronghold of northern and central India". After its break-up with the Janata Party, the BJS was resurrected under the name of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Despite its dismal performance in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP has gradually emerged as the largest political party in the Indian parliament. The party's ideology and organization was perfectly suited to the new political climate of the early 1980's. During these years, ethnicity and religion were frequently used factors to divide the voters. The party was largely helped by the RSS and its extensive grass root network. At the national level, the party exploited two legal cases: the Shah Bano and the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid. Taking the whole span of period, it would not be

wrong to say that its electoral gains were highly considerable.

METHODOLOGY

The detailed constituency level analysis of margin of victory for the BJP has been carried out for two parliamentary elections,—1996, and 1998. The trends and spatial patterns of margin of victory by the party are examined at the unit of parliamentary constituency with the help of tables and maps for the selected seven parliamentary elections. Wherever required such patterns are also examined at the unit of state and region for testing the regional character of the party. Among the cartographic techniques, choropleth method is used to show the patterns of margin of victory. Bar diagram and line graph are also used to show the trends in margin of victory for the party. For all the elections under study, the source of data remained the election reports as published by the Election Commission of India.

MARGIN OF VICTORY BY THE BJP IN 1996:

The detailed studies of the data of margin of victory for the party in this parliamentary election clearly indicates that out of the total 161 seats won by the party, there were 30 constituencies where the margin of victory for the party was below 5 percent. In 48 constituencies, the margin of victory for the party was between 5 to 10 percent. Similarly, in 32 constituencies margin of victory for the party was 10 to 15 percent and in 19 constituencies margin of victory for the party was between 15 to 20 percent. There were 13 constituencies where the margin of victory for the party was between 20 to 25 percent and in 19 constituencies it was 25 percent & above (Table 1).

The constituencies-wise analysis of the margin of victory for the party indicates that, out of the total 30 constituencies where the margin of victory for the party was

below 5 percent, majority were from south and central Uttar Pradesh, eastern Rajasthan, north central Maharashtra, eastern Madhya Pradesh and southern Bihar (Figure 1). Of the total 48 constituencies where the margin of victory for the party was between 5 to 10 percent, mostly were from north-western and eastern Uttar Pradesh, southern Bihar, western and central Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Gujarat.

Similarly, out of the total 32 constituencies where the margin of victory for the party was between 10 to 15 percent, 13 were from Uttar Pradesh, 5 each from central Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, 3 from Rajasthan 2 from Maharashtra and one each from Haryana, Delhi, Gujarat and Karnataka (Figure 1).

Of the total 19 constituencies where the margin of victory for the party was between 15 to 20 percent, 6 were from Uttar Pradesh, 4 each from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, 2 from Rajasthan and one each from Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi and Bihar. Out of 13 constituencies where the range of margin of victory for the party was between 20 to 25 percent 5 were from Madhya Pradesh, 2 each from Delhi and Uttar Pradesh and one each from Haryana, Bihar, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. Of the 19 constituencies (won by the party) which belonged to the category of 25 percent & above, 10 were from Gujarat, 4 from Uttar Pradesh, 3 from Madhya Pradesh and one each from Maharashtra and Karnataka.

MARGIN OF VICTORY BY THE BJP IN 1998:

The analysis of the margin of victory of the party in this election clearly shows that, out of the total 182 seats won by the party, there were 50 constituencies, where the margin of victory for the party was below 5 percent. There were 48 constituencies, where the margin of victory for the party was between 5 to 10 percent. The 37 constituencies won by the party fall under the category of 10 to 15 percent. There were 18 constituencies, where the margin of victory for the party was between 15 to 20 percent. There 15 constituencies, where the party's margin of victory was 20 to 25 percent and in 14 constituencies margin of victory was 25 percent & above (Table 2).

The constituency-wise analysis of the margin of victory of the party indicates that, out of the total 50 constituencies, where the party's margin of victory was below 5 percent, majority were from north central and southern Uttar Pradesh, western and central-southern Madhya Pradesh, central Gujarat, and Maharashtra (Figure 2). Of the 48 constituencies having margin of victory between 5 to 10 percent, majority were from central Uttar Pradesh, northern Madhya Pradesh, central Bihar, Karnataka (3), Gujarat (2) and one each from Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Similarly, out of the total 37 constituencies, where margin of victory for the party was between 10 to 15 percent, majority were from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Orissa and Karnataka. Of 18 constituencies, where the margin of victory was between 15 to 20 percent, 3 were each from Uttar Pradesh and Orissa, 2 each from Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Karnataka and one each from Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. Out of 15 constituencies, which fell under the category of 20 to 25 percent, 3 were each from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Gujarat,

2 each from Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka and one each from Delhi, and Andhra Pradesh. Of 14 constituencies' having 25 percent & above margin of victory majority were from Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat (Figure 2).

The overall conclusion from the maps showing the patterns of the BJP's margin of victory is that the constituencies won by the party by good margin were basically restricted to the north-central and western parts of the country. However, the party had shown its presence in the southern state of Karnataka (figure 1 & 2).

TRENDS AND PATTERN OF MARGIN OF VICTORY

Winning seats with a margin of five percent and above, and maintaining the same in space and time framework is a good indicator of measuring and mapping the strong areas of the party.

The analysis of the margin of victory of the party in 1996 elections shows that in total there were 131 constituencies where the margin was 5 percent and above. Out of these, maximum were from Uttar Pradesh (44), Madhya Pradesh (24), Bihar (15), Gujarat (14), Maharashtra (13) and Rajasthan (12). In the 1998 election, the number of seats was 132 (a gain of 1 seats) where the party's candidates won with 5 percent and above. Majority of the constituencies were from Uttar Pradesh (35), Madhya Pradesh (23), Bihar (18), Gujarat (15), Karnataka (11), and Orissa (7).

The regional distribution of the margin of victory of the party clearly indicates that majority of the constituencies where the party has registered 5 percent and above margin of victory was from the Hindi-Speaking States (Fig. 4). The share of this region was 75.57 percent in 1996 elections, while in 1998; it was 65.15 percent (a decrease of 10.42 percent). Outside this region, the Western India has emerged as key states of the party as this region contributes more than 12 percent in both the elections (20.61 percent in 1996 and 12.87 percent in 1998). The Southern States also has registered their presence.

CONSISTENCY IN MARGIN OF VICTORY

In total there were 190 constituencies where the margin of victory for the party was five percent or above. This includes 73 constituencies where this level of margin is maintained for the party in both elections. The pattern of 73 constituencies indicates that these constituencies were from Uttar Pradesh (23), Madhya Pradesh (16), Gujarat (12), Bihar (12), Delhi (1), Rajasthan (2), and Maharashtra (1), (Fig. 3). The regional character of consistency in margin of victory of the party clearly shows that the Hindi-Speaking States (with 78.08 percent share) has emerged as the area of strength of the party. Besides this, the party registered its presence in the Western States as this region shared 17.8 percent of seats where the party's margin of victory was 5 percent and above.

RUNNER-UP CANDIDATES

The spatial analysis of the BJP candidates as runner-up candidates is also important in making an overall assessment about the party's areas of strength. In 1984 when the party could win only two seats, there were 102 seats where its candidates were runner-up. Of these 97 were from

North India (75 from Hindi Speaking States) and the remaining 5 from South India. In those elections in which the party was able to win more seats, the number of runner-up candidates was found to be less.

This is natural also as the area of influence of the party is regionalized and whenever the number of seats won increases the number of runner-up candidates decreases. The number of runner-up candidates was maximum in 1998 (i.e. 125) when the party had experienced a gain of 21 seats from 1996 elections. Majority of the runner-up candidates for the party were from North India and more specifically the Hindi-Speaking States (64).

The state wise analysis of runner-up candidates reveals that in addition to the Hindi Speaking region and Western India, the party is giving stiff competition in the Southern states as well as Seven- sister states.

CONCLUSION

By all means and methods undertaken for analyzing the electoral performance of the BJP in terms of margin of victory, it was found that the party's core area of strength was the Hindi-Speaking heartland. In both elections, the share of this region remained more than 65 percent. From this region, the core states for the party were Madhya Pradesh (Madhya Bharat), Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar (Jharkhand area) and Delhi.

The study, however, has also revealed that through organizing various yatras, agitations, making flash changes in its policies (putting various controversial agendas at the back), working with different regional parties, the party certainly has created space for itself beyond the Hindi Speaking States. Outside the Hindi Speaking States, the party has emerged as a strong electoral force in the Western states (Gujarat) and Karnataka. Gujarat has emerged as the key state for the party. In certain states its performance largely depends on the working of its alliance with regional parties' viz. Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar, Orissa, Karnataka and Punjab.

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Table 1: Margin of Victory of the BJP, 1996 Parliamentary Elections

Sr. No.	State/U.T.	Percent Margin of Victory and no. of constituencies					
		Below 5	5-10	10-15	15-20	20-25	25&Above
1	Jammu & Kashmir	-	-	-	1	-	-
2	Himachal Pradesh	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	Punjab	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Chandigarh	-	1	-	-	-	-
5	Haryana	-	2	1	-	1	-
6	Delhi	1	-	1	1	2	-
7	Uttar Pradesh	8	19	13	6	2	4
8	Madhya Pradesh	3	7	5	4	5	3
9	Bihar	3	8	5	1	1	-
10	Orissa	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	West Bengal	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	Sikkim	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	Arunachal Pradesh	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	Assam	1	-	-	-	-	-
15	Meghalaya	-	-	-	-	-	-
16	Nagaland	-	-	-	-	-	-
17	Manipur	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	Mizoram	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	Tripura	-	-	-	-	-	-
20	Rajasthan	5	1	3	2	1	-
21	Gujarat	2	3	1	-	-	10
22	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	-	-	-	-	-	-
23	Maharashtra	5	5	2	4	1	1
24	Goa	-	-	-	-	-	-
25	Daman & Diu	-	-	-	-	-	-
26	Karnataka	2	2	1	-	-	1
27	Andhra Pradesh	-	-	-	-	-	-
28	Kerala	-	-	-	-	-	-
29	Tamil Nadu	-	-	-	-	-	-
30	Pondicherry	-	-	-	-	-	-
31	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	-	-	-	-	-	-
32	Pondicherry	-	-	-	-	-	-
	ALL INDIA	30	48	32	19	13	19

Table 2: Margin of Victory of the BJP, 1998 Parliamentary Elections

Sr. No.	State/U.T.	Percent Margin of Victory and no. of constituencies					
		Below 5	5-10	10-15	15-20	20-25	25&Above
1	Jammu & Kashmir	-	-	-	2	-	-
2	Himachal Pradesh	-	1	1	-	-	1
3	Punjab	-	-	2	1	-	-
4	Chandigarh	1	-	-	-	-	-
5	Haryana	1	-	-	-	-	-
6	Delhi	2	1	1	1	1	-
7	Uttar Pradesh	22	18	5	3	3	6
8	Madhya Pradesh	7	12	6	2	2	1
9	Bihar	2	7	8	-	3	-
10	Orissa	-	-	3	3	-	1
11	West Bengal	-	-	1	-	-	-
12	Sikkim	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	Arunachal Pradesh	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	Assam	1	-	-	-	-	-
15	Meghalaya	-	-	-	-	-	-
16	Nagaland	-	-	-	-	-	-
17	Manipur	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	Mizoram	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	Tripura	-	-	-	-	-	-
20	Rajasthan	2	1	1	1	-	-
21	Gujarat	4	2	4	2	3	4
22	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	-	-	1	-	-	-
23	Maharashtra	3	1	-	-	-	-
24	Goa	-	-	-	-	-	-
25	Daman & Diu	1	-	-	-	-	-
26	Karnataka	2	3	3	2	2	1
27	Andhra Pradesh	1	1	1	-	1	-
28	Kerala	-	-	-	-	-	-
29	Tamil Nadu	1	1	-	1	-	-
30	Pondicherry	-	-	-	-	-	-
31	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	-	-	-	-	-	-
32	Pondicherry	-	-	-	-	-	-
	ALL INDIA	50	48	37	18	15	14

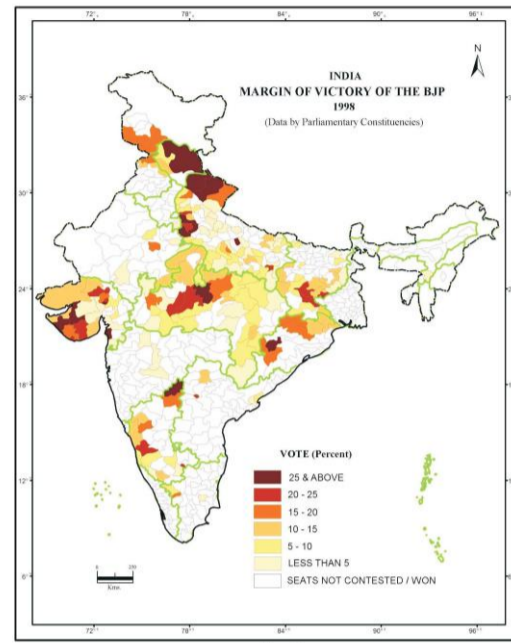


Figure 2

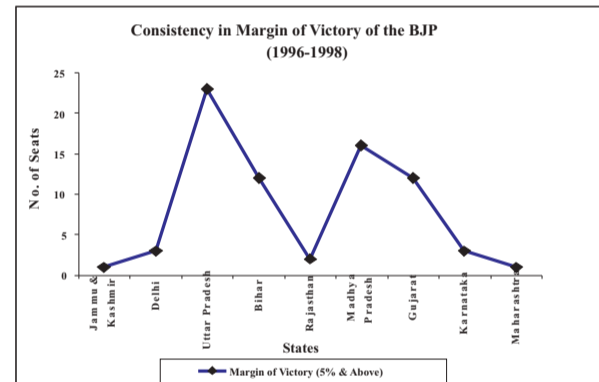


Figure 3

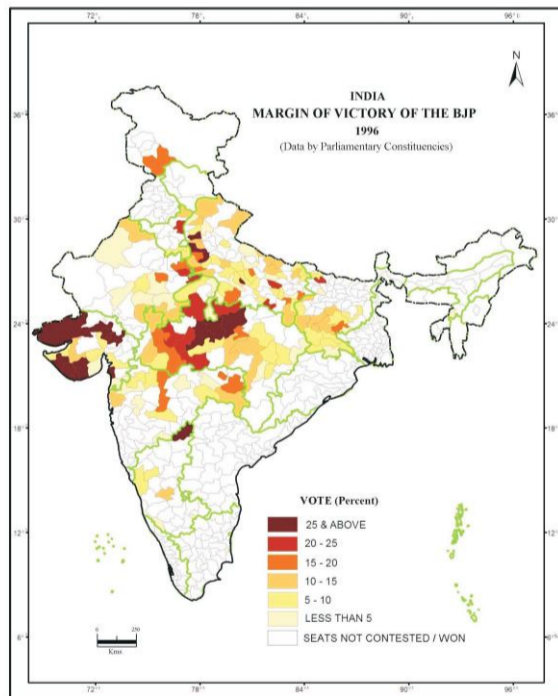


Figure 1

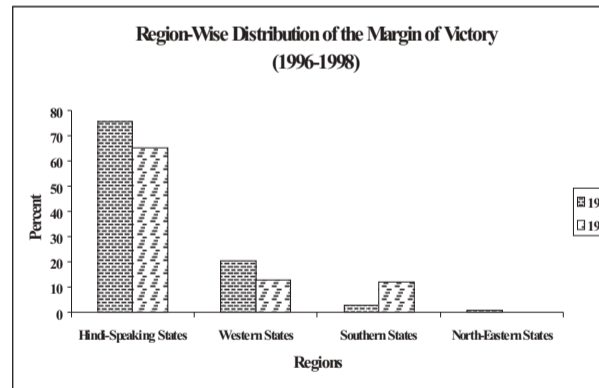


Figure 4

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