

Electoral Performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party: 1991 Parliamentary Election

Kiran Bala

Department of Geography, Kishan Lal Public College, Rewari, Haryana, India

Abstract

The present work has been focused on the electoral performance of the BJP in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections. The 1991 Lok Sabha has been analysed in detail in terms of percent votes, seats won and seats contested by the BJP. The analysis includes a discussion on the impact of the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, Mandal Commission, Rath Yatra on the performance of the BJP. An attempt also has been made to find the reasons behind the advancements made by the BJP in this election.

Keywords: electoral performance, bharatiya janata party

Introduction

Following the 1989 general elections, a coalition government was formed at the “centre” under the leadership of V. P. Singh. The BJP was a partner in the coalition but decided to support the government from outside. The BJP’s ambition behind its support was to buy time to consolidate its electoral gains. The opportunity came when the V. P. Singh government on August 7, 1990 announced to implement the Mandal Commission Report to provide 27% reservation in jobs for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The problem with V. P. Singh was that, on the one hand, he had to depend on the BJP for the stability of his government and, on the other, he could not afford to alienate the Muslims. He, therefore, “tried to use the Mandal Commission recommendations as a weapon to divide the Hindu community on the basis of caste alignments and, thus, to pull the rug out from under the BJP” (Sinha, Dipankar, 1991) [17]. Caste identities and their political alignments vary greatly from one region to the other. Due to varied historical backgrounds it was difficult for any single caste or ethnic group to organize on a national-scale and same was the case with any political party. Hence, in the Mandalization of Indian politics, the BJP saw the inherent danger to its hard-earned Hindu vote-bank.

The proposal of V.P. Singh for providing reservation to OBCs was highly unpopular among the urban upper castes and middle class Hindus, who served as the BJP’s vote bank. It is the members of this group who exercise control over industry, finance, administration and even the machinery responsible for maintaining law and order in the country. Realizing the fact that the implementation of Mandal Commission Report has further widened the caste cleavage so that organizing people on caste lines is a distant dream, the BJP leadership came to the conclusion that only purely religious issues could unite the Hindus. The decision was taken to “mobilize the Hindus on the basis of the highly emotional matter of reestablishing their control over sacred places that had been converted into mosques during the Muslim rule, a strategy that resulted in Advani’s *rath yatra*” (Malik, Y. K. and Singh, V. B., 1992) [15].

In August 1990, Advani decided to launch his “*Rath Yatra*” from September 25-29, 1990, a march from Somnath (Gujarat) to Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh). It was supposed to reach Ayodhya on 30 October 1990 to start *Kar Seva* (ceremonial construction) for the temple. The initiative, met with great enthusiasm in different parts of the country. However, before the march could reach Uttar Pradesh, Advani was arrested in Bihar. Thus the *Rath Yatra* failed in the context that it could not reach the designated place. However, Advani’s followers continued their march to Ayodhya which was ultimately stopped by the police firing. The party “used a highly effective audio and video cassette campaign to highlight how thousands had been martyred by the guns of the U.P. Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav on 30 October 1990” (Ghosh, Partha S., 1999) [8]. The party had also started giving hints that it might withdraw support from the V.P. Singh government on the Mandal issue and on October 7, 1990 Advani directly accused Singh, complaining that the prime minister “has not even thought about it”. On October 18, 1990 V. P. Singh issued a special ordinance to acquire the disputed land at Ayodhya until the dispute was resolved by the Supreme Court of India. But, Singh withdrew the ordinance within 48 hours.

V. P. Singh’s Janata Dal government was “a party of clashing personalities that included Chandra Shekhar, who had sought the prime ministership for himself, a bitterly disappointed claimant, as he was excluded even from the cabinet. Another contender for power, Devi Lal, struck a last-minute deal with V.P. Singh and became Deputy Prime Minister” (Saxena, Rekha, 1994) [12]. However, the sense of deprivation and revenge in Devi Lal and Chander Shekhar produced a powerful combination. The two supremely ambitious and influential leaders came together to dislodge Singh. On the other hand, “October 23 became a landmark date when BJP President Advani was arrested on his way to participate in the projected temple construction work at Ayodhya and the party withdrew its support from the government” (Sinha, Dipankar, 1991) [17]. Finally, on November 7 1990, he lost the vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha and submitted his resignation.

Following the fall of the V.P. Singh government, the BJP started planning for elections in earnest. Actually it had started preparation the day the Mandal Report was announced to be implemented.

In February 1991, Advani was replaced by Murli Manohar Joshi as president of the party. The Hindu nationalist campaign, took place from the VHP platform. On 17 Feb. 1991, Chandra Shekhar had persuaded the VHP and the BMAC (Babri Masjid Action Committee) to exchange evidence substantiating their claims to the Babri Masjid. After three rounds of talks, the VHP accused the BMAC of adopting 'dilatatory tactic' and decided to resume mass action. A month earlier, when the VHP had announced plans for a gherao of Parliament House on April 4, 1991, Ashok Singhal (president of the VHP) had declared: "at least 10 million Ram Bhaktas, including saints, sadhus, dharmacharyas and sankaracharyas will reach the national capital to see to it that Government, which is the biggest obstacle in the construction of Shri Ram Temple at Ayodhya, either surrender or collapse" (Jaffrelot, C., 1996)^[11].

The dissolution of the ninth Lok Sabha, called the party into the question of the desirability of holding a rally but eventually the decision to stick to the plan was taken on the occasion of "the meeting of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha of [...] the RSS at Nagpur when top leaders of all sister organizations met to take stock of the situation". This decision and the way it was implemented, was consistent with the aggressive posture of the Hindu Nationalist organizations. As Jaffrelot wrote, "the rally brought between one and three million people, ..., some of whom came from very distant, often rural, areas" (Jaffrelot, C., 1996)^[11].

After the fall of the V.P. Singh government, the BJP contested the 1991 general elections without any alliance and made a remarkable performance. It had crossed 20 percent vote barrier for the first time. The political strength of the BJP over the years had improved in different parts of India. The party's continued upper-castes support (with increased intensity in this election) led to the decisive defeat of the Congress (I) in several northern and western states.

The results of the tenth Lok Sabha elections changed the nature of the party system in India so drastically that it has ended the domination of one party system, as well as the unchallenged sway of the Nehruvian secular political ideology. To many political commentators, the improvements made by the BJP in its percent vote tally and seats won in 1991 not only virtually eliminated the old guard of the Hindi Speaking States, i. e. the Congress, but also posed a challenge to the secular policies of the Indian state and that for the first time since independence.

In this election, the BJP presented itself as a pro-Hindu party, hoping that its Hindu nationalist platform would unify the Hindu community and expand its electoral support in rural areas and among the lower castes. "Having been outbid by the INC during the 1980s on the issue of Hindu nationalism, during this election it deployed the sensitive issue of the Ramjanambhoomi-Babri mosque to regain the support of its religious constituency" (Seshia, Shhaila, 1998)^[10]. During its election campaigns, in response to the challenges posed by the Congress (I) and the Mandal Commission Report, the BJP "tried to bring various castes under its political domain. It had

used the Ram Janambhoomi controversy as a powerful religious symbol to create a sense of unity among the divergent Hindu castes and it had succeeded in this venture to some extent" (Engineer, Asghar Ali, 1991).

Despite the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and the sympathy wave in favour of the Congress thereafter, the BJP succeeded in increasing its seats (120) in the Lok Sabha as well as its support base in terms of vote share. It became the second largest party in the lower house of Parliament as well as the second largest vote receiver after the INC. The BJP's success in the 1991 elections proved "that popular support for a party espousing Hindu nationalism exists among the Indian electorate, although support came primarily from the Hindi-Speaking North" (Seshia, Shhaila, 1998)^[10].

In the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, the party raised several socio-economic issues before the electorate but its poll campaign was primarily, focused on two issues; Hindutva and construction of a Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and secondly, on the price rise and spread of corruption under the Congress rule. "Various other Hindu sects also extended support to the BJP and appealed to their devotees to vote for the party which would protect Hindu interests. The message was clear-only BJP could do that. Soon, Jain *munis* were also seen joining hands with Hindu *sadhus* and saints in support of the BJP candidates. The VHP and other RSS front organizations insisted that the construction of the Ram mandir was a matter of right to correct the injustice done to them in the past by Muslim invaders, and a question of faith and 'national pride'" (Shah, Ghanshyam, 1998)^[9]. The VHP told people that *voting for the BJP in the election was equivalent to performing kar seva*. Before and during the election campaign in Gujarat, the BJP asserted that the Congress as well as the Janata Dal had pampered Muslims and other minorities and the country was now facing the problem of terrorism from Muslims in Kashmir and Sikhs in Punjab.

Though the Congress succeeded in extracting a considerable "sympathy effect" but could not prevent the BJP from emerging as the second largest party in the country. "The polls suggested that the large constituency won by the BJP was generally, fairly young, predominantly male, urban and upper-caste, though, the party also gained a considerable rural constituency particularly among upper-caste communities in the north, whereas, the party's voter profile was somewhat more broadly based in parts of Gujarat and Maharashtra" (Hansen, T. B., 1999)^[9]. Although the election results did not correspond with the high expectations of the BJP, but the party had managed to shed its north Indian image to some extent and expanded its base to the east and south also.

"The BJP became widely popular among retired army personnel and inside the armed forces and the police because of its promises of a stronger army, nuclear armament, strong – arm policies in Kashmir and Punjab, and the general celebration of national strength, honor and a martial stance found a receptive audience" (Hansen, T. B., 1999)^[9].

Seats Contested by the BJP in 1991

In 1991, the Lok Sabha elections were held on 524 seats because. The BJP had fielded its maximum number of aspirants ever. It had contested 468 seats (only 225 in 1989). The party had won 120 seats with 20.11 percent vote of the electorate.

Table 1: Electoral Performance of the BJP, 1991 Indian Parliamentary Elections

Sr. No.	State / U.T.	Seats			Votes Polled (%)	Swing in Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won		
1	Jammu & Kashmir*	6	-	-	-	-
2	Himachal Pradesh	4	4	2	42.79	-2.51
3	Punjab*	13	-	-	-	-
4	Chandigarh	1	1	-	28.8	16.5
5	Haryana	10	10	-	10.17	1.87
6	Delhi	7	7	5	40.21	14.01
7	Uttar Pradesh	85	84	51	32.82	25.22
8	Madhya Pradesh	40	40	12	41.88	2.18
9	Bihar	54	51	5	15.95	2.95
10	Orissa	21	21	-	9.5	8.2
11	West Bengal	42	42	-	11.66	9.96
12	Sikkim	1	-	-	-	-
13	Arunachal Pradesh	2	2	-	6.11	-
14	Assam	14	8	2	9.6	-
15	Meghalaya	2	2	-	6.89	-
16	Nagaland	1	1	-	3	-
17	Manipur	2	2	-	8.1	5.8
18	Mizoram	1	-	-	-	-
19	Tripura	2	2	-	2.99	2.39
20	Rajasthan	25	25	12	40.88	11.28
21	Gujarat	26	26	20	50.37	19.87
22	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1	1	-	35.39	-
23	Maharashtra	48	31	5	20.2	-3.5
24	Goa	2	2	-	15.61	14.91
25	Daman & Diu	1	1	1	31.88	-
26	Karnataka	28	28	4	29.28	26.68
27	Andhra Pradesh	42	41	1	9.63	7.63
28	Kerala	20	19	-	4.61	0.11
29	Tamil Nadu	39	15	-	1.65	1.35
30	Pondicherry	1	1	-	1.97	-
31	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1	1	-	4.85	-
32	Lakshadweep	1	-	-	-	-
	ALL INDIA	543*	468	120	20.11	8.75

*In 1991, elections were held on 524 seats. Elections were not held on 19 seats, six in Jammu & Kashmir and 13 in Punjab.

In this parliamentary election, the party had contested all the seats in Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Goa, Daman & Diu, Karnataka, Pondicherry and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Besides, it had also contested 84 seats (out of 85) in Uttar Pradesh, 51 seats (out of 54) in Bihar, 41 seats (out of 42) in Andhra Pradesh, 31 seats (out of 48) in Maharashtra, 19 seats (out of 20) in Kerala, 15 seats (out of 39) in Tamil Nadu and 8 seats (out of 14) in Assam (Table 1). The party had not fielded its candidates in the states and union territory of Mizoram, Sikkim and Lakshadweep.

The spatial patterns of seats contested in 1991 elections and its comparison with 1989 elections clearly highlights the following:

- 1) The party looks more as a national party in the context of seats contested in 1991 than 1989. This is substantive with the fact that out of the total 468 seats contested by the party 210 were those contested by it in 1989. However, there were as many as 258 new seats contested by the party;
- 2) The party's spatial spread was more particular in South

Indian States. From only 30 seats (out of the total 132 seats) in South Indian States in 1989 elections, the party had fielded its candidates on as many as 105 seats in 1991 elections. Almost similar changes in the patterns are visible in North-Eastern States (Figure 5.1);

- 3) A noticeable change is noticed in the case of Hindi-Speaking States also. From only 117 seats (out of the total 226) in Hindi-Speaking States in 1989 elections, the party contested 222 seats in 1991 elections (an increase of 105 seats);
- 4) The major states where the change in number of seats contested by the party was maximum were : Uttar Pradesh (31 to 84) ; Bihar (24 to 51) ; West Bengal (19 to 42) ; Orissa (6 to 21) ; Andhra Pradesh (2 to 41) ; Karnataka (5 to 28) and Gujarat (12 to 26);
- 5) The basic reason behind the increase of seats contested by the party was to present itself as a national alternative to the Congress and to get maximum from the Hindi constituencies.

Vote Polled by the BJP in 1991

In this election, the party had polled 20.11 percent vote. It was a positive swing of 8.75 percent from 1989 for the party. The

party had recorded maximum gain in percent vote in the states and union territories of Karnataka (+26.68%), Uttar Pradesh (+25.22%), Gujarat (+19.87%), Delhi (+14.01%), Rajasthan (+11.28%) and West Bengal (+9.96%) (Table 1).

Table 2: Performance of National Parties in 1991 Parliamentary Elections

Party	Seats		Votes polled (%)
	Contested	Won	
INC	487	232	36.26
BJP	468	120	20.11
JD	308	59	11.84
CPM	60	35	6.16
CPI	42	14	2.49
JP	349	5	3.37
ICS(SCS)	28	1	0.36
LKD	78	0	0.06
JD(S)	2	0	0.00

Among all the national parties, the performance of the BJP had improved further in this election. Both in terms of vote polled and seats won, the party in this election had ranked second (the first being the Congress) (Table 2).

The data analysis has also shown that the sympathy wave due to assassination of Rajiv Gandhi hardly made any dent in the support base of the BJP. The average vote percent for the party in the constituencies where elections were held prior to and after the assassination was 22.42 and 25.89 respectively.

The average of vote percent for the party in this election was 24.62 percent. There were seven states (Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka) and four union territories (Chandigarh, Delhi, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu) where the party had polled above the national average.

In this election, the party had improved its performance further in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. The maximum gain for the party, in terms of percent vote received, however, was in Karnataka (26.68) and Uttar Pradesh (25.22) (Table 1). In Karnataka, where the BJP's candidates received 29.28 percent of vote marked an improvement over 2.6 percent vote that its five candidates received in 1989. This had placed it second to the Congress (41.9) and ahead of the Janata Dal (18.5 percent). The Mandal issue supported by the Janata Dal and the Congress alienated the dominant caste groups, such as

Vokkaligas and Lingayats. In this election, many disgruntled Vokkaligas and Lingayats supported the BJP. The state of Karnataka has emerged as an exception for the party in the election otherwise poorly performed in South India.

Cutting across caste barriers voting in Uttar Pradesh had been more on communal lines. The BJP secured Hindu votes with the help of "Ram wave". On the other hand, "the Congress-I lost its clout among the upper castes, while the minorities had turned against the Congress for allowing 'shilanyas' at the disputed site, [it also] earned the wrath of the majority community by supporting the Mulayam Government which was held responsible for killing in Ayodhya... In fact, a seizable section of the electorate, both in the urban and semi-urban areas, had decided to support the BJP" (Roy, Meenu, 1992)^[14].

In addition to the traditional supporting states of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the Party position in Gujarat was quite spectacular. The party in Gujarat had improved its position further by opening its doors to the backward castes that remained unincorporated in any party and brought in elites from these castes as 'junior' partners. "30 percent of its district-level leaders in Gujarat, as well the state president of the BJP, came from the backward castes by 1991. At the same time, it offered representation to scheduled castes and tribes also to wean them away from the Congress party. Elites from these groups, seeking office but indifferent to the party that gave them a channel to office, responded to these widened opportunities" (Chandra, Kanchan, 2004).

In West Bengal, the party had improved its percent vote share from 1.7 percent in 1989 to 11.66 in 1991. It received heavy support among the non-Bengali community from the Hindi belt, Marwaris and Gujaratis. Rather than the "Ram factor", the BJP focused on the issue of illegal immigration of Muslims from Bangladesh, which helped the party to become successful in border districts and among those people who had been displaced at partition. It must be emphasized that the network of the RSS in the state (particularly the border districts with Bangla Desh) has been working for the last many years.

The constituency-wise display of the BJP percent vote clearly shows that there were 26 constituencies where the party had polled 50 percent and above vote (Table 3). This included 13 constituencies from central and southern Gujarat, 6 from western Madhya Pradesh, 3 each from eastern

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of the BJP Vote, 1991 Parliamentary Elections

Sr. No.	State / U.T.	Percent Vote and no. of constituencies						Total
		Below 10	10-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50 & Above	
1	Jammu & Kashmir	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Himachal Pradesh	-	-	-	-	4	-	4
3	Punjab	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Chandigarh	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
5	Haryana	6	4	-	-	-	-	10
6	Delhi	-	-	-	2	5	-	7
7	Uttar Pradesh	1	4	28	34	14	3	84
8	Madhya Pradesh	-	-	7	11	16	6	40
9	Bihar	20	8	14	7	2	-	51
10	Orissa	12	7	2	-	-	-	21
11	West Bengal	17	22	3	-	-	-	42

12	Sikkim	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	Arunachal Pradesh	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
14	Assam	4	2	-	2	-	-	8
15	Meghalaya	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
16	Nagaland	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
17	Manipur	1	1	-	-	-	-	2
18	Mizoram	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	Tripura	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
20	Rajasthan	-	-	2	9	11	3	25
21	Gujarat	-	-	-	4	9	13	26
22	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
23	Maharashtra	3	4	7	11	6	-	31
24	Goa	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
25	Daman & Diu	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
26	Karnataka	3	3	10	8	3	1	28
27	Andhra Pradesh	28	8	3	-	2	-	41
28	Kerala	18	1	-	-	-	-	19
29	Tamil Nadu	14	1	-	-	-	-	15
30	Pondicherry	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
31	Andaman& Nicobar Islands	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
32	Lakshadweep	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	ALL INDIA	136	67	77	90	72	26	468

Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and one from Karnataka. There were 72 constituencies where the party had polled between 40 to 50 percent. Majority of such constituencies were from Madhya Bharat and

Chhattisgarh regions of Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Utrakhand and central Uttar Pradesh, eastern Rajasthan and Gujarat (Figure 1).

Out of the 90 constituencies, where the party's vote share was between 30 to 40 percent, 34 were from Uttar Pradesh (northern part) alone, 11 each from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, 9 from Rajasthan, 8 from Karnataka, 7 from Bihar, 4 from Gujarat, 2 each from Assam and Delhi and one each from Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu. Of the total 77 seats where the party had polled between 20 to 30 percent, majority were from eastern and southern Bihar, central, Bundelkhand and Poorvanchal regions of Uttar Pradesh and southern and coastal Karnataka (Figure 1). The state of Uttar Pradesh alone had 28 such constituencies. The states of Bihar and Karnataka had 14 and 10 such constituencies, respectively. Of the total 67 constituencies where the party had polled between 10 to 20 percent, 22 were alone from the Communist stronghold West Bengal and eight each from Bihar and Andhra Pradesh.

There were 136 constituencies where the party's vote share was less than 10 percent (Table 3). The states where the number of such constituencies was more than 50 percent of the state's total included Kerala (95%), Andhra Pradesh (66%), Haryana (60%) and Orissa (57%). The party had polled less than 10 percent in all the constituencies of the north-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura. Among the major territorial states where the party's electoral performance in terms of percent votes was dismal included Haryana (10.17%), Orissa (9.5%), Andhra Pradesh (9.63%), Tamil Nadu (1.65%), and Kerala (4.61%).

In the South Indian States, the BJP remained weak (except Karnataka). "There are a number of general factors related to the unique political cultures of southern India that have shaped

the BJP's strategies for organizational and electoral growth. In the south, the BJP has been faced with traditions of relative syncretism and regionally distinct patterns of religious devotion that failed to accord with the north Indian overtones of the Ram Mandir campaign. Accordingly, while the Ram Mandir issue was not absent from BJP programs in the south in the early 1990s, it was positioned as secondary to other issues, either ethno-religious or socioeconomic, that had a greater degree of regional relevance. Similarly, the propagation of Hindutva as an over-arching pan-Hindu ideology has been confronted by political cultures that have, over several decades, often centered upon linguistic-cultural regional assertion that cuts across the appeal of an 'imagined' ethno-nationalist community as a primary point of political mobilization. In a related way, the BJP's projection of a form of unitary, centralizing nationalism can be seen to be at odds with regional political discourses which centre on increased state autonomy, resist the imposition of Hindi as a national language, and fear 'northern' domination in national governance" (Gillan, M., 2002).

The overall conclusion from the map showing the patterns of the BJP vote percentage in 1991 is that the main supporting areas for the party continues to be central and western parts of the country. Of the total 98 constituencies where the party had polled 40 percent and above vote, more than 75 percent constituencies (ie.75) were from the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan. In addition to Hindi-Speaking States, the state of Gujarat has emerged as a stronghold for the party. Out of the total 26 constituencies where the party had polled above 50 percent, 13 alone were from Gujarat (Table 3). The party in this election has shown its presence in the South Indian States and more particularly the state of Karnataka. In the state of Karnataka out of the total 28 constituencies, the party had polled more than 40 percent in 4 constituencies and in eight its vote share was between 30 to 40 percent. There were two constituencies in Andhra Pradesh also where the party had polled above 40 percent vote. In addition to this, the party certainly had shown

gradual signs of making inroads in the communist's strongholds of West Bengal and Kerala. In West Bengal, the number of constituencies where the party had polled between 10 to 30 percent had improved from one in 1989 to 25 in 1991.

In this election, in total, the party had polled 5,53,45,075 votes (against 2,11,73,598 votes in 1989 elections). The close analysis shows that out of the total votes polled by the party in an election, the Hindi-Speaking States still continues to be the most important region (Figure 1). However, its share in the total votes polled by the party is on declining trend. It was 68 percent in 1984, 61 percent in 1989 and 56.96 percent in 1991. This was despite the fact that the share of Uttar Pradesh in the total votes polled by the BJP had improved from 8.65 percent in 1989 to 22.23 percent in 1991. Barring Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the vote share of the party had improved in 1991 in all states and union territories. The basic reason behind the decline in the share of Hindi-Speaking States was additional improvements in the performance of the party in other parts of the country. For example, the share of Karnataka in the party's vote improved from 1.37 percent in 1989 to 8.14 percent in 1991. Same was the case with West Bengal (1.54 in 1989 to 6.55 in 1991).

Seats Won

Out of the total 120 victories the party had in this election, maximum (87) were from Hindi Speaking States. The 5 victories were from South Indian States (4 from Karnataka and one from Andhra Pradesh) and 2 were from Assam. The party won 25 seats from Western States (20 from Gujarat and 5 from Maharashtra). In total, four states; viz. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat constitute about 80 percent of the total seats won by the party in this election. The seats won for the party were basically from southern Bihar, central and northern Uttar Pradesh, western Madhya Pradesh, eastern Rajasthan and central-southern Gujarat (Figure 2).

In this election, the party had improved its seats tally, against the 1989 elections, in the states of Uttar Pradesh (from 8 seats to 51), Gujarat (12 to 20), Karnataka (from nil to 04), Assam (nil to two) and Andhra Pradesh (nil to one). The party had recorded maximum losses in the states of Madhya Pradesh (27 to 12 seats), Maharashtra (10 to 5 seats) and Bihar (8 to 5 seats). It has been remarked that the party suffered reverses in above two mentioned states was largely "due to death of Rajiv Gandhi, which created a swing in favour of the Congress party" (Pai, Sudha, 2001) [7]. However, other factors also contributed in the reversal of the party in these states. In Maharashtra the BJP-Shiv Sena combine experienced a set back on account of the strength of the Congress (I) and the anti-Mandal position of the alliance.

Conclusion

Analysis of results at all India level has revealed improvements in the performance of the BJP. From 1989 to 1991, the number of seats contested by the party has increased from 225 to 468, the percent vote share increased from 11.36

to 20.11 and the number of seats won increased from 85 to 120. Out of the total 120 victories for the party in this election, 69 were from those 210 seats contested by the party in both 1989 and 1991 elections. The party also won 51 from 258 newly contested seats. Majority of the victories from newly contested seats were from Uttar Pradesh (32) and Gujarat (10). In terms of vote received, the spatial patterns indicates that the party continues to receive maximum support from the Hindi-Speaking States, however, over the period the share of this region in the total votes received by the party is on declining trend. In this election, the party had improved its vote share appreciably in Uttar Pradesh. Outside the Hindi-Speaking States, the vote share for the party had recorded immense improvements in the states of Karnataka and Gujarat. There was basically a combination of three factors which worked in favour or against the party: mobilization of Hindus through Rath Yatra; the Mandal Commission Report; and assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. It has also been found that whereas in some states the Mandal effects worked against the party (Bihar, Maharashtra) in some states (Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka) it helped the party as large number of.

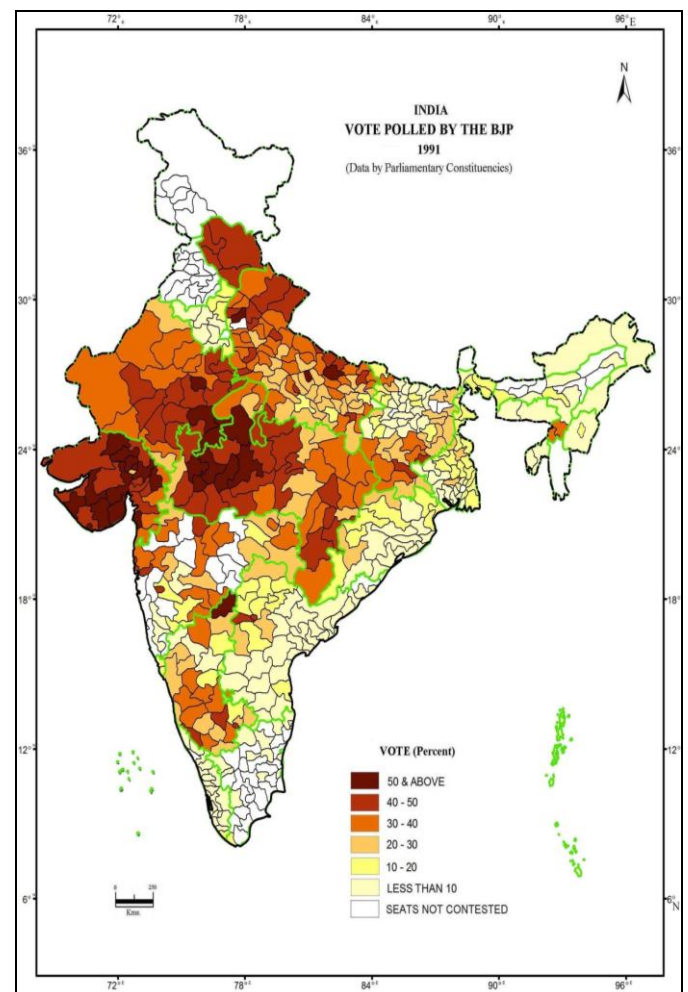


Fig 1

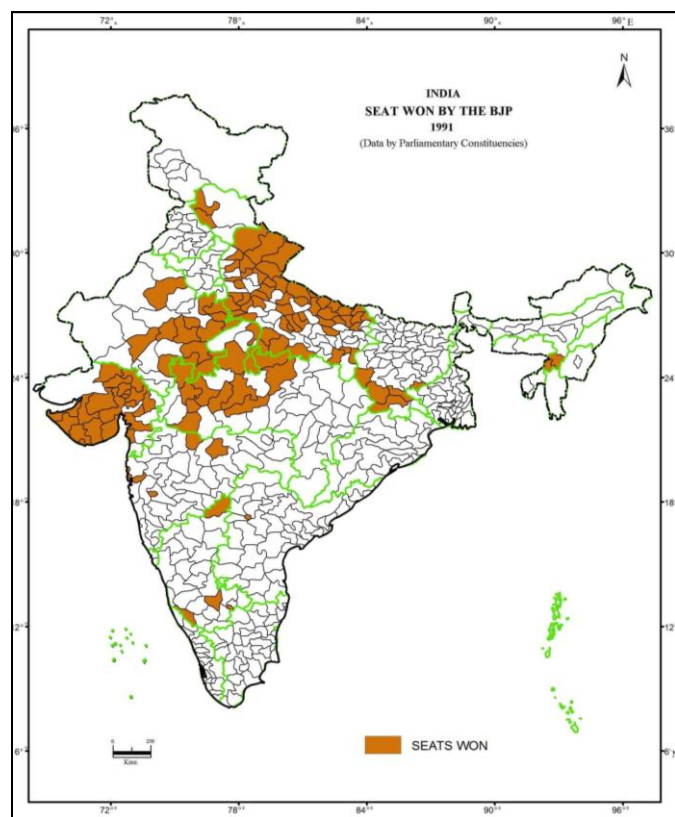


Fig 2

Higher castes people voted the BJP as a backlash to Mandal Commission report. The Hindu factor worked well for the party in Gujarat. Despite its improved performance in Karnataka and Assam, the party continues to be a party of North India in general and Hindi Speaking States in particular. In fact, rather than a national, it is a “mega regional party” working hard to extend its bases.

References

1. Roy R, Wallace P eds. *India's 2004 Elections: Grass-roots and National Perspectives*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2007.
2. Sridharan, E. *Coalition Strategies and the BJP's Expansion, 1989-2004*, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 2005; 43(2):194-221.
3. Singh VB. *Rise of the BJP and Decline of the Congress: An Appraisal*, in Vora, Rajender and Palshikhar, Suhas eds., *Indian Democracy: Meaning and Practices*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2004.
4. Wallace P. *Introduction: The New national Party System and State Politics* in Wallace, P. and Roy, R. eds., *India's 1999 Elections and 20th Century Politics*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003.
5. Ghosh Partha S. *The Congress and the BJP: Struggle for the Heartland*, in Mehra, Ajay K. et al. eds., *Political Parties and Party System*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003.
6. Gillan M. *Assessing the 'National' Expansion of Hindu Nationalism: The BJP in Southern and Eastern India, 1996-2001*, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 2002; 25(3):17-39.

7. Pai Sudha. *State Politics: New Dimensions*, Shipra Publications, Delhi, 2001.
8. Ghosh Partha S. *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: from Periphery to Centre*, Manohar Publisher & Distributors, New Delhi, 1999.
9. Hansen TB. *The Saffron Wave*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. Shah, Ghanshyam, (1998) *The BJP's Riddle in Gujarat: Caste, Factionalism and Hindutva* in Hansen, T.B. and Jaffrelot, C. (eds.), *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, 243-266.
10. Seshia Shaila. *Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party*, *Asian Survey*. 1998; 38(11):1036-1050.
11. Jaffrelot C. *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*, Penguin Books India Ltd, New Delhi, 1996.
12. Saxena Rekha. *Indian Politics in Transition: From Dominance to Chaos*, Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1994.
13. Malik YK, Singh VB. *Hindu Nationalists in India: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party*, Vistar: New Delhi, 1994.
14. Roy Meenu. *Battle for Ballot*, National Publishing House, Jaipur, 1992.
15. Malik YK, Singh VB. *Bharatiya Janata party: An Alternative to the Congress (I)?*, *Asian Survey*, 1992; 32(4):318-336.
16. Engineer Asghar Ali. *Lok Sabha Elections and Communalisation of politics*, *Economic and Political Weekly*. 1991; 24(33):1649-1652.
17. Sinha Dipankar. *V. P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, and Nowhere Politics" in India*, *Asian Survey*. 1991; 31(7):598-612.

