



## Electoral performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party in parliamentary election of 1984

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### Abstract

This paper is committed to the analysis of the electoral performance of the BJP in the parliamentary elections of 1984. The basic unit of analysis is parliamentary constituency, however, wherever required, analyses have also been carried out at state and regional levels.

**Keywords:** Bharatiya Janata Party, parliamentary constituency, election

### Introduction

In 1984, out of the total 543 seats, the elections were held on 514 seats and the party had fielded its candidates on 224 seats. The party had fielded its maximum number of candidates in "...the states where the party, as part of the Janata Party, had either led the government or shared power with other components of the Janata Party" (Malik, Y. K. and Singh, V. B., 1994) [3]. At the time of this election, the electoral environment was totally in favour of the Congress. It was not basically due to the good work done by the party in the past but primarily due to assassination of Indira Gandhi and partly due to divided opposition. "Whatever anger and dissatisfaction people had with the Congress rule not only disappeared with Indira Gandhi's assassination but were even converted into a sympathy wave for Rajiv in this election" (Malik, Y. K. and Singh, V. B., 1994) [4]. Brass (1986:662) [6] has noted that the extent of the sympathy factor was not homogeneous. However, the sympathy factor did affect uncommitted voters and that women voted disproportionately in favour of the Congress.

In this environment, there was hardly any space left for any political party to perform. The electoral situation became more cumbersome for the BJP largely due to half-hearted support from hardcore Hindu organizations like the RSS and the VHP. Nanaji Deshmukh's appeal to the RSS to support Rajiv Gandhi had created a lot of confusion among the RSS workers. The net result of this all was that the Congress succeeded in capturing a large number of votes of the BJP supporters.

Despite its elaborately articulated electoral platform, ideological changes and the projection of a new image, the 1984 elections results spelt disaster for the party. Except Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat where it shared seats with the Telugu Desam and the Janata Party respectively, its local adjustments in other states did not work. Out of the 224 seats it contested, only two seats (one each from Andhra Pradesh

and Gujarat) were won. A.K. Patel won from Mehsana constituency of Gujarat and Chandupatla Janga Reddy won from Hanamkonda constituency of Andhra Pradesh. In this election all the BJP leaders, including A.B. Vajpayee, were defeated. The party had polled 7.74 percent vote of the electorate.

### Seats Contested by the BJP in 1984

In this election, the party had contested all the seats in Madhya Pradesh, Goa and Chandigarh. It had also contested 50 seats (out of 85) in Uttar Pradesh, 32 seats (out of 54) in Bihar, 24 seats (out of 25) in Rajasthan, 20 seats (out of 48) in Maharashtra, 11 seats (out of 26) in Gujarat, 9 seats (out of 42) in West Bengal, 6 seats each in Karnataka (out of 28) and Haryana (out of 10), 5 seats each in Kerala (out of 20) and Delhi (out of 7), 4 seats (out of 21) in Orissa, 3 seats (out of 4) in Himachal Pradesh, 2 seats (out of 42) in Andhra Pradesh, 1 seat each in Tamil Nadu (out of 39), Jammu & Kashmir (out of 6), Manipur (out of 2) and Tripura (out of 2) (Table 1).

The party had not fielded its candidates in the states and union territories of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Pondicherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, and Lakshadweep. In this election, polling was not held in Punjab, Assam and Mizoram (Table 1).

The map showing the patterns of the seats contested indicate that in fielding its candidates the party had preferred the constituencies of the North-Indian States in general and the Hindi-Speaking States in particular. The party had contested about 72 (i.e. 161 seats) percent of the total seats of the Hindi Speaking Heartland. The seats contested by the party in this region were about 72 percent of the total seats contested by the party. The party had contested 14 seats (out of 132) in the South Indian States, 2 seats (out of 24) in North-Eastern States and 31 seats (out of 75) in the Western States.

**Table 1:** Electoral performance of the BJP, 1984 Indian Parliamentary Elections

| S. No | State / U.T.              | Seats |           |     | Votes Polled (%) |
|-------|---------------------------|-------|-----------|-----|------------------|
|       |                           | Total | Contested | Won |                  |
| 1     | Jammu & Kashmir           | 6     | 1         | -   | 1.71             |
| 2     | Himachal Pradesh          | 4     | 3         | -   | 23.27            |
| 3     | Punjab*                   | 13    | -         | -   | -                |
| 4     | Chandigarh                | 1     | 1         | -   | 5.6              |
| 5     | Haryana                   | 10    | 6         | -   | 7.54             |
| 6     | Delhi                     | 7     | 5         | -   | 18.85            |
| 7     | Uttar Pradesh             | 85    | 50        | -   | 6.42             |
| 8     | Madhya Pradesh            | 40    | 40        | -   | 29.99            |
| 9     | Bihar                     | 54    | 32        | -   | 6.92             |
| 10    | Orissa                    | 21    | 4         | -   | 1.18             |
| 11    | West Bengal               | 42    | 9         | -   | 0.4              |
| 12    | Sikkim                    | 1     | -         | -   | -                |
| 13    | Arunachal Pradesh         | 2     | -         | -   | -                |
| 14    | Assam*                    | 14    | -         | -   | -                |
| 15    | Meghalaya                 | 2     | -         | -   | -                |
| 16    | Nagaland                  | 1     | -         | -   | -                |
| 17    | Manipur                   | 2     | 1         | -   | 6.96             |
| 18    | Mizoram*                  | 1     | -         | -   | -                |
| 19    | Tripura                   | 2     | 1         | -   | 0.77             |
| 20    | Rajasthan                 | 25    | 24        | -   | 23.69            |
| 21    | Gujarat                   | 26    | 11        | 1   | 18.64            |
| 22    | Dadra & Nagar Haveli      | 1     | -         | -   | -                |
| 23    | Maharashtra               | 48    | 20        | -   | 10.07            |
| 24    | Goa, Daman & Diu          | 2     | 2         | -   | 3.04             |
| 25    | Karnataka                 | 28    | 6         | -   | 4.68             |
| 26    | Andhra Pradesh            | 42    | 2         | 1   | 2.22             |
| 27    | Kerala                    | 20    | 5         | -   | 1.75             |
| 28    | Tamil Nadu                | 39    | 1         | -   | 0.07             |
| 29    | Pondicherry               | 1     | -         | -   | -                |
| 30    | Andaman & Nicobar Islands | 1     | -         | -   | -                |
| 31    | Lakshadweep               | 1     | -         | -   | -                |
|       | ALL INDIA                 | 543*  | 224       | 2   | 7.74             |

\* In 1984, elections were held on 514 seats. Elections were not held in Punjab, Assam and Mizoram.

### Vote Polled by the BJP in 1984

In this election, the party had polled 7.74 percent vote of the electorate. The vote percentage figure appears quite dismal but it is to note that in this election, the BJP was the only party

(barring the INC, 49.10 percent vote) that had polled over seven percent of the total votes. The Janata Party had polled 6.89 percent vote (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Performance of National Parties in 1984 Parliamentary Elections

| Party        | Seats     |     | Votes Polled (%) |
|--------------|-----------|-----|------------------|
|              | Contested | Won |                  |
| Congress (I) | 491       | 404 | 49.10            |
| CPI (M)      | 59        | 22  | 5.87             |
| Janata       | 207       | 10  | 6.89             |
| CPI          | 61        | 6   | 2.71             |
| ICS          | 31        | 4   | 1.52             |
| LKD          | 171       | 3   | 5.97             |
| BJP          | 224       | 2   | 7.74             |

The average vote for the party in this election was 19.48 percent. There were seven states (Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh) and one union territory (Delhi) where the party had polled above the national average. The state-wise average percent vote data also indicates that the party had quiet meaningful electoral support base in Andhra Pradesh (49.86%), Gujarat (41.49%), Delhi (33.96%), Himachal

Pradesh (29.74%) and Madhya Pradesh(29.27%).

The constituency-wise display of the BJP percent vote clearly depicts that there were only two constituencies (one each in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat) where the party had polled 50 and above percent vote (Figure 1). These were the constituencies won by the party in this election. There were 15 constituencies ranging from 40 to 50 percent vote and majority of them were from Gujarat (7) and Madhya Pradesh (6).

**Table 3:** Frequency Distribution of the BJP Vote, 1984 Parliamentary Elections

| S. No | State/U.T.                | Vote Percentage and no. of constituencies |       |       |       |       |          | Total |
|-------|---------------------------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------|-------|
|       |                           | Below 10                                  | 10-20 | 20-30 | 30-40 | 40-50 | Above 50 |       |
| 1     | Jammu & Kashmir           | -   | 1     | -     | -     | -     | -        | 1     |
| 2     | Himachal Pradesh          | -   | -     | 1     | 2     | -     | -        | 3     |
| 3     | Chandigarh                | 1   | -     | -     | -     | -     | -        | 1     |
| 4     | Haryana                   | 3   | 1     | 2     | -     | -     | -        | 6     |
| 5     | Delhi                     | -   | -     | 1     | 4     | -     | -        | 5     |
| 6     | Uttar Pradesh             | 26  | 17    | 7     | -     | -     | -        | 50    |
| 7     | Madhya Pradesh            | 1   | 6     | 17    | 10    | 6     | -        | 40    |
| 8     | Bihar                     | 14  | 12    | 5     | 1     | -     | -        | 32    |
| 9     | Orissa                    | 4   | -     | -     | -     | -     | -        | 4     |
| 10    | West Bengal               | 9   | -     | -     | -     | -     | -        | 9     |
| 11    | Manipur                   | -   | 1     | -     | -     | -     | -        | 1     |
| 12    | Tripura                   | 1   | -     | -     | -     | -     | -        | 1     |
| 13    | Rajasthan                 | 2   | 6     | 5     | 10    | 1     | -        | 24    |
| 14    | Gujarat                   | -   | -     | 1     | 2     | 7     | 1        | 11    |
| 15    | Maharashtra               | 1   | 7     | 7     | 5     | -     | -        | 20    |
| 16    | Goa, Daman & Diu          | 2   | -     | -     | -     | -     | -        | 2     |
| 17    | Karnataka                 | 2   | -     | -     | 4     | -     | -        | 6     |
| 18    | Kerala                    | 4   | 1     | -     | -     | -     | -        | 5     |
| 19    | Andhra Pradesh            | -   | -     | -     | -     | 1     | 1        | 2     |
| 20    | Tamil Nadu                | 1   | -     | -     | -     | -     | -        | 1     |
| 21    | Andaman & Nicobar Islands | -   | -     | -     | -     | -     | -        | -     |
| 22    | Lakshadweep               | -   | -     | -     | -     | -     | -        | -     |
| 23    | Pondicherry               | -   | -     | -     | -     | -     | -        | -     |
|       | All India                 | 71  | 52    | 46    | 38    | 15    | 2        | 224   |

Out of the 38 constituencies where the party had polled between 30 to 40 percent, majority were from central Madhya Pradesh and eastern Rajasthan. Five constituencies from Maharashtra and four from Karnataka also fall under this vote category. Of the total 46 constituencies wherein the party's vote share was from 20 to 30 percent, majority were from Madhya Pradesh, northern Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and western Rajasthan. Of the total 52 constituencies where the party had polled between 10 to 20 percent, majority were from central Uttar Pradesh and southern Bihar. There were as many as 71 (i.e. 32 percent) constituencies where the party candidates had recorded less than 10 percent vote. Majority of these constituencies were from the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Kerala (Table 3 and Figure 1). The map showing the patterns of the BJP vote clearly indicates that the party vote share was largely concentrated in the Hindi Speaking Heartland. The importance of Hindi Speaking Heartland for the BJP can be judged from the fact that out of the total vote polled by the party (1, 82, 02, 853), 68 percent was from this region alone. Outside this region, the main supporting areas for the party were Maharashtra and Gujarat (Figure 1).

#### Seats Won by the BJP in 1984

Although, the party in this parliamentary election had contested the election on 224 seats but could win only 2 seats, one each from Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat (Figure 2).

The electoral performance of the party was meager if one goes by the percent polled data (i.e. 7.4 percent) and seats won (two seats). However, the party's electoral performance in this election was to be viewed within the overall electoral environment of that time: sympathy factor after the

assassination of Mrs. Gandhi; failure of opposition parties in providing a credible alternative to the Congress; and backlash of the Hindus. In the overall political scenario, the only compensation for the party was that there were as many as 102 constituencies where its candidates were runner-up. This include 36 constituencies from Madhya Pradesh, 15 from Rajasthan, 12 from Maharashtra, 10 from Gujarat, 7 each from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, 4 from Karnataka, 3 from Himachal Pradesh, 2 from Haryana and 1 from Andhra Pradesh.

#### Conclusion

The 1984 parliamentary elections produced a stunning majority for the Indian National Congress. The results were totally traumatic for the BJP which had contested the election with a more liberal face. The emotional turmoil resulting from the assassination of Indira Gandhi caused a Hindu Backlash that helped the Congress to a very large extent. The plight for the BJP was evident from the fact that it could win only 2 seats of the total 224 contested seats. However, among all the national parties, it ranked second in terms of total vote received. The analysis has shown that the main supporting area for the party was the Hindi-Speaking heartland which alone contributed 68 percent vote to the BJP. Outside this heartland, the party had some perceptible presence in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka. In terms of seats contested also the party favoured the Hindi-Speaking heartland. Of the total 224 seats contested by the party, about 72 percent (i.e. 161) were from this region. In South India, the party had contested only 10.61 percent (i.e. 14) of the total 132 seats. Outside the Hindi-Speaking heartland, the main two states where the party had fielded its candidates in good numbers were Maharashtra and Gujarat.

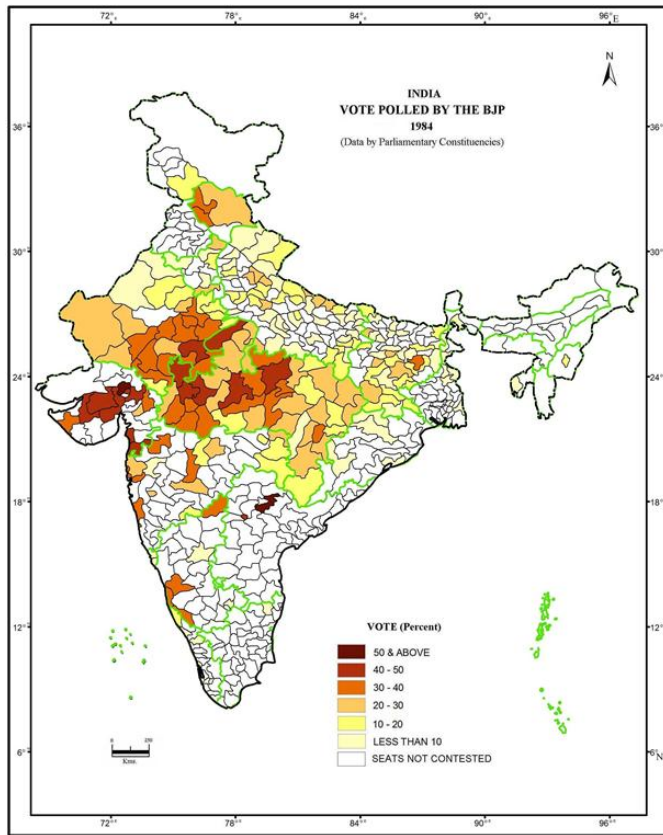


Fig 1

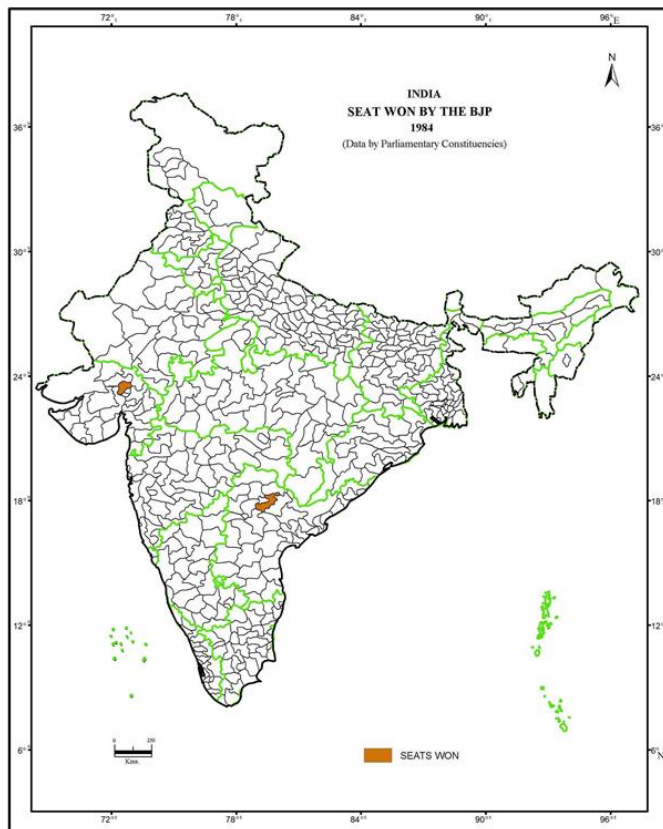


Fig 2

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