

Changing Nature of Electoral Democracy in Delhi: A Lok Sabha Perspective

Vikas Yadav

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi & Doctoral Fellow,
Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)

*Corresponding Author Email: vyadav.phd@polscience.du.ac.in

Abstract: Elections are the vital political expression and the main source of power for the voters in a democratic setting. Elections act as a link among the voters, electoral politics and political parties. The very basis of democracies are the people because the real sovereignty lies in the hands of the people. Political parties in democracies work as an important channel of communication through representation, integration and transformation. They serve as democratic wheels that allows people to have a meaningful say in the power. In democracies, parties constitute the link between people on the one hand and government on the other. Hence, Political parties and democracy are closely intertwined with each other, and through elections nature of electoral politics becomes more evident and observable. In this context, this study investigates the changing nature of electoral democracy in Delhi. The objectives of study are to examine and analyze the Lok Sabha verdicts of Delhi. The study will explore the relationship among the voters, political parties and electoral democracy. This research highlights and examines the issues, promises and manifestos brought in by the political parties for the voters. The study underscores an especial analysis of 2014, 2019 and 2024 Delhi Lok Sabha electoral verdicts in detail.

Keywords: Election, Manifestoes, Political Parties, Policies and Promises

INTRODUCTION

It is vital to understand and study the changing nature of electoral politics and voting behaviour of a particular region that helps us to understand the new changes, developments and transformations in the behaviour of the voters. In this regard, this article focuses on the historical perspective of Delhi Lok Sabha elections with especial focus on the 2014, 2019 and 2024 election's results analysis wherein focus will be to examine the electoral performances of the parties in terms of vote percentage, seat share, etc. It focuses on examining the changing electoral trajectory of Delhi Lok Sabha elections. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to understand the issues, promises, and the manifestos brought in by the political parties during the election campaigns. Thus, article aims at studying the changing pattern of electoral behaviour and the changing trends of party competition of the electoral politics in Delhi from Lok Sabha perspective. The various issues influencing the voting pattern of the Delhi electorate in Lok Sabha election will be analysed, be it development, governance, populism and so on.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

From the last two to three decades, the study of elections and electoral behaviour has attracted various scholars who have shown interest in the field, which has led to the increased significance of studying elections (psephology) within the discipline of Political science. In this Regard different studies have highlighted the changing nature of electoral democracy. The work of Wyatt (2015) emphasized the significance of the Arvind Kejriwal's Leadership in the national party system, while highlighting 2014 Lok Sabha verdict. The study illustrated the convergence and divergence of the Kejriwal's leadership at the state and national level. Chhibber and Verma (2019), stressed the rise of second dominant party system, where demographic and democratic profile has substantial gains for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Bhattacharya and Pulla (2019), highlighted the historic mandate of 2019 Lok Sabha election, while providing the analysis of the second term of BJP and its new governance agenda. Choudhary (2024) provided the theoretical lens to map out the transforming nature of parties and party system by emphasizing on the role of voters in electoral democracy. Ranjan (2015) demonstrates the BJP's clean Sweep in Delhi and diminished performance of Congress Party and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

METHODOLOGY

This study on the electoral democracy of Delhi has been extracted with the help of quantitative and qualitative data providing a mixed analysis of the research. With the help of the primary and secondary sources, the study has made an attempt to fill the research gap on the transformation of the issues and narratives in the electioneering process of Delhi. The content analysis method

gauged the research study of Delhi from the different angles which unfolded multiple dimensions of voting behaviour and changing dynamics in the electoral politics. The numerical strength of the research has been pulled out from the original source of Election Commission statistics for different election verdicts. Likewise, for the assessment of the political issues and narrative, the electoral manifestoes of the mainstream parties were looked upon. Hence, the study is analytical and descriptive in nature.

DELHI LOK SABHA VERDICTS: TRACING HISTORY AND KEY TRENDS FROM 2014 TO 2024

Since the first Lok Sabha election held in India in 1952, we have had elections in Delhi. So, it's not that Delhi has witnessed the elections in recent years. It had a long political history, with the electoral battle between the different political parties, such as Congress Party, Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, Bharatiya Janata Party, and erstwhile Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS). From the first general election in 1952 to the 1962 elections the Congress Party dominated the electoral outcomes in Delhi's Lok Sabha elections.

In the 1967 elections with the massive victory of Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS), the Congress hegemony was challenged. BJS in this election won six out of seven seats, while the Congress party was left only with the one seat. In 1971 Congress once again dominated the electoral outcomes by winning all the seven seats in Delhi. In 1977 elections Bharatiya Lok Dal won all the seven seats this was due to the growing opposition against the Congress and the Indira Gandhi's decision of declaration of emergency. Following the wind change from Janata party to once again in the favor of the Congress party in 1980 elections, public opinion inevitably arose, and voters expressed themselves strongly at the polls. The Congress again emerged victorious in the year 1980 and won six seats in Delhi, while remaining one seat was won by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Next parliamentary elections were held in 1984, following Indira Gandhi's assassination and the subsequent sympathy wave during this election, the Congress won a landslide victory in the country and also swept the elections in Delhi.

In the 1989 elections, one could see the formation of coalitions against the Congress party by different parties due to which Congress lost the majority nationally in this election. So, looking at the electoral outcomes of 1989 elections in Delhi, BJP was able to win four seats, Janata Dal won one seat and Congress party was able to win only two seats. In 1991 and 1996 Lok Sabha elections similar outcomes can be seen with the BJP's victory of five seats, while Congress was left with only two seats. In 1998 elections, six seats were won by the Bharatiya Janata Party and one by the Congress. In 1999 elections, for the first time BJP swept all the parliamentary seats in Delhi. With high hopes and the slogan "India Shining", BJP went to the polls in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections in Delhi, however Congress party astonished the BJP nationwide and also secured six Lok Sabha seats. Similarly in 2009 elections also Congress party was able to repeat its winning journey with sweeping all the seats in Delhi.

A major transformation in the electoral politics of India can be seen with the 16th Lok Sabha election where for the first time BJP was able to win the absolute majority and became the dominant national political party in the country. This election marked an unprecedented situation

wherein a single party was able to secure absolute majority and it ended long period of coalition politics (Choudhary, 2024). This also witnessed a new phase in Indian politics where leadership factor remained crucial. The BJP in its winning journey also managed to win all the seven parliamentary seats in Delhi's 2014, 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha elections which further needs to be looked upon in detail.

RESULTS

The electoral battle in Delhi always remained a contest between the two major parties; the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) and the Congress Party. Historically, these two political parties dominated the electoral politics in Delhi. In Delhi assembly elections and Lok Sabha elections the electoral battle was always among these two parties.

However, from 2014 onwards, one could see the emergence of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), a new political development in the electoral politics of Delhi.

AAP in 2014 election made its national debut and positioned itself as a third force in the national politics, as an alternative to the Congress and BJP. However, in this election AAP was able to win only four seats in Punjab, the only state where the party was able to make his presence (Wyatt, 2015). More importantly in Delhi, the party's home ground, it had lost all the seven seats in 2014, 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Therefore, talking about the 2014 Lok Sabha election results in Delhi, BJP claimed a landslide victory with winning all the seven seats with 46.63 per cent of vote share. However, AAP solidified its stronghold by positioning itself in the second place in Delhi with 33.08 per cent vote share and the third position was secured by the Congress party with 15.22 per cent vote share. BJP's vote share was drastically increased in the 2014 as compared to 2013 Delhi assembly elections, in which the party had received around 33 per cent of vote share.

In 2019 Delhi Lok Sabha elections also, this trend continued, and BJP once again won all seven parliamentary seats with the 56.86 per cent of vote share. In this election Congress was able to increase its vote share to 22.63 per cent as compared to previous election, and positioned itself in second place, but the party was unable to win single seat this time also and was reduced to zero. While, talking about the performance of AAP, it had received 18.2 per cent vote share, losing itself to the third place in this election and also received less vote per cent as compared to previous election, this time also party was unable to win single seat. The recently held 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Delhi also witnessed similar trend where BJP swept all seven seats with 54.66 per cent of vote share. On the other side, the seat sharing between INDIA alliance partners Congress and AAP does not bring fruitful results. They cumulatively got 43.26 per cent of vote share.

So, one could see that from 2014 onwards Lok Sabha elections in Delhi were dominated by the BJP, the party accomplished the clean sweeps in Delhi by gaining through the Modi wave. The leadership style of prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi and his strong campaigning favored the party and altered the mood of the voters. In a triangular election, the BJP's performance level was significantly much better and miles ahead than its opponent parties like Congress and AAP in Delhi (Bhattacharyya & Pulla, 2019). Therefore, the 2014, 2019 and 2024 electoral mandate in Delhi Lok Sabha elections

clearly shows that the BJP undoubtedly got the support from the Delhi voters largely on the basis of party's focus on good governance, development, welfare schemes, where people extended their overwhelming support on the nationalist lines while realizing the three importantNs namely; "*Niyat, Niti and Neta*".

The first N '*Niyat*' here refers to the 'intentions' of the parties and leaders for the people, whether promises made by the parties and leaders will come into the existence or not if they will win the elections. So, in this regard BJP received the support from the Delhi voters and AAP and Congress Party faced major setback. The second N '*Niti*' here refers to the 'policies', where voters get influenced by the policies put forward by the political parties during the election campaigns which may lead to their welfare. In this regard BJP was also able to secured the trust among the voters and other parties failed to do so. The third N '*Neta*' here refers to the leader. Voters look for the leaders who can best represent their will, who can fulfil their demands, needs and aspirations. So, leadership also played a significant role in Delhi Lok Sabha elections where BJP largely gained electoral success through the charismatic leadership of Narendra Modi and his electoral wave in last three Lok Sabha elections. Thus, looking at these three Ns in context of Delhi Lok Sabha elections one could see role of voters and the electoral gains of the BJP, AAP and Congress Party.

DISCUSSION

In the 2014, 2019 and 2024 Delhi Lok Sabha elections it is important to understand the issues, promises, and the manifestos brought in by the political parties during the election campaigns. Thereby, this section of the study would lay emphasis upon examining the electoral prospects of the political parties while highlighting the key takeaways of these electoral verdicts. In this regard, how BJP, Congress and AAP tried to gain the support of the voters during these elections needs to be looked upon in detail.

So, firstly talking about the BJP's focus in the Delhi's Lok Sabha elections, one could locate the convergence of national and state level issues. BJP mainly focused on the issues of development, the issue of national security, good governance, and social welfare. Party's slogans such as '*Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas*', '*Ab ki Bar, Modi Sarkar*', '*Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat*', has largely attracted the voters towards the party (Atal & Choudhary, 2015). The party also promised to work on the important issues such as strengthening the national security strategy, focusing on matters like "Article 370, Ram Mandir, and Uniform Civil Code" (Atal & Choudhary, 2015). etc. through which its electoral prospects further got strengthened. Party also draws the attention of the household voters by directly telling them about the benefits of the various social welfare schemes and programmes such as Ujjwala scheme, Ayushman Bharat, "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Jan Dhan Yojana, PM Awas Yojana" and others (Chhibber & Verma, 2019). During 2024 Lok Sabha elections party highlighted its ten years of good governance agenda with the motto Modi ki Guarantee 2024, which got attention from the voters (Modi ki Guarantee, Manifesto , 2024). Thereby, all these factors helped the BJP in receiving and sweeping all the seven seats of Delhi with the overwhelming support from the voters in these elections.

Secondly, talking about the Congress Party's promises, agendas and manifesto in these Lok Sabha elections, it portrayed itself as the party of all-encompassing

groups which believes in politics of inclusion. (Atal & Choudhary, 2015). The party in its 2014 Lok Sabha election manifesto '*Your Voice Our Pledge*' came with the objective for political and socio-economic transformations while focusing on a 15-point agenda. Party through its detailed action plan promised to uplift the basic rights for all workers, it promised for right to health, women empowerment, promoting the youth and student agendas, making governance reforms, etc. (Your Voice Our Pledge, Manifesto , 2014). However, these promises of the Congress party did not receive much attention from the voters and the party failed drastically in the Delhi's seven parliamentary seats in 2014 Lok Sabha election (Ravi, 2015).

The party in 2019 Lok Sabha elections came with the motto that 'Congress will deliver' where it promised for the development in different sectors and also it pledged for job creation, promised for a better livelihood, and most importantly the party advocated for the good governance and so on (Congress Will Deliver, Manifesto , 2019). In 2024 Lok Sabha election Congress party came with the '*Nyay Patra*' focusing on equity, youth, women, economy, national security and environmental concerns (Nyay Patra, Manifesto , 2024). However, voters have not supported Congress electoral promises in these elections. The party's traditional social base got fragmented and it also faced the major problem with regard to leadership factor in these elections not only in Delhi but at national level. Hence, it shows that the Congress Party which claimed to be the key player in social welfare schemes was unsuccessful not only in parliamentary, but also in state Assembly elections in Delhi after 2014.

Lastly, talking about the AAP's promises, agendas and manifesto in these Lok Sabha elections, the party for the first time in 2014 national elections entered into the electoral battle, where it came with important objectives. The party in its 2014 national manifesto promised to end corruption, aimed to develop a channel of communication directly with the people by focusing on the notion of Swaraj. It promised to ensure the common man accessible and affordable justice system, good health facilities, education for all, providing employment, empowering the vulnerable sections of the society, providing social security benefits, and so on (AAP Manifesto, 2014).

Moreover, it is also important to note that the AAP came with a specific 'electoral manifesto for Delhi' in 2019 Lok Sabha elections. It aimed for the transformation in key areas such as, police reforms, reforms in education, providing women safety, zero corruption in society, improving infrastructure, making Delhi as clean city and pollution free, improving transportation, focusing on Yamuna River Rejuvenation and so on. The party also made a promise on solving the problems of slums and thereby providing houses and other amenities for all the needy. (AAP Manifesto, 2019). In 2024 Lok Sabha elections AAP promised ten guarantees for the entire nation, including Delhi's full statehood status, fight against unemployment, promises regarding mohalla clinic and electricity, improvement in education and among others (AAP Manifesto , 2024). Despite having electoral base and support in Delhi, the AAP has not been able to transform its assembly success to the parliamentary strength.

However, it important to note that the above-mentioned promises made by Congress, and AAP did not bring them even a single seat out of the seven parliamentary seats in 2014, 2019 and 2024 Delhi Lok Sabha elections.

Despite such lucrative promises made by the AAP in order to solve different socio-economic issues, the voters preferred to not extend the support. The reason for such a sharp divergence of support was because the voters made a conscious decision that the AAP is better suited to serve at the local level rather than national level. However, AAP had also lost 2025 assembly elections in Delhi. Similarly, Congress party also lost its electoral support in Delhi Lok Sabha and assembly elections. Further, the voters thereby chose to vote for the BJP in large number (ignoring the AAP and Congress party) because according to voters the BJP was well suited. Also, the BJP's clout under the leadership of Narendra Modi at the national level was at an all-time high during these elections and that's why the voters gave them all the seven parliamentary seats in these Lok Sabha elections.

CONCLUSION

There are various factors that have contributed to the BJP's victory in the last three parliamentary elections in Delhi, but among them the most crucial were the Narendra Modi's leadership, issue of national security and fragmented opposition during these elections. Therefore, there are various factors that helped BJP's electoral success in Delhi due to which the party had won all the seven Lok Sabha seats, while the Congress and AAP failed drastically in attracting the voters in the electoral battle. AAP and Congress's inability to highlight their respective developmental work enabled BJP to the gain lead in these elections.

People of Delhi strongly supported the BJP and voted on the nationalist agenda. The party performed very well not only in Delhi but across India from 2014 onwards, that is why it had secured absolute majority in these parliamentary elections. Moreover, the important issues which dominated the electoral scene in Delhi's 2014, 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha election campaign includes development, employment, corruption, infrastructure, issues of water and electricity, etc. were the core to the Delhi voters.

REFERENCES

1. (2024). *AAP Manifesto*. Aam Aadmi Party.
2. (2014). *AAP Manifesto*. Aam Aadmi Party.
3. (2019). *AAP Manifesto*. Aam Aadmi Party.
4. Atal, Y., & Choudhary, S. K. (2015). *Right Turn in Indian Polity: Modi on BJP's Chariot*. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publication.
5. Bhattacharyya, R., & Pulla, V. (2019). Prime Minister Modi Returns, 2019: New Governance Agenda. *Space and Culture*, 7(1), 1-14. doi:<https://doi.org/10.20896/saci.v7i1.569>
6. Chhibber, P., & Verma, R. (2019). The Rise of Second Dominant Party System in India: BJP's New Social Coalition in 2019. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 7(2), 131-148. doi:10.1177/2321023019874628
7. Choudhary, S. K. (2024). *India@75: A Changing Electoral Democracy*. New Delhi: Aakar Books.
8. (2019). *Congress Will Deliver, Manifesto*. Indian National Congress.
9. (n.d.). *Election Commission of India, 2014, 2019, 2024 Statistical Reports*.
10. (2024). *Modi ki Guarantee, Manifesto*. Bharatiya Janta Party.
11. (2024). *Nyay Patra, Manifesto*. Indian National Congress.
12. Ravi, R. (2015). Reclaiming the Capital: BJP's Clean Sweep in Delhi. In P. Wallace, *India's 2014 Elections: A Modi-led BJP Sweep* (pp. 163-188). New Delhi: Sage Publications.
13. Wyatt, A. (2015). Arvind Kejriwal's Leadership of the Aam Aadmi Party. *Contemporary South Asia*, 23(2), 167-180.
14. (2014). *Your Voice Our Pledge, Manifesto*. Indian National Congress.