

name. Two other factors seem to have contributed much more to the landslide victory of the BJP. First is the occurrence of the Lok Sabha elections within months of the Assembly poll giving the BJP a chance to consolidate the momentum, and second is the much greater level of satisfaction among the voters with the government in Bhopal government as compared to the one in New Delhi. The dissatisfaction with the UPA government was largely on account of rising prices and corruption, and cost the Congress badly in the election. Last minute defections from the Congress and the party's inability to overcome factionalism within its ranks also contributed to its debacle. With the BJP sitting pretty after consolidating its base and making further inroads among Dalits and Tribals, the Congress has its task cut out. In order to make a recovery among its traditional voters, the party will have to do much more than just wait for the BJP government to make a major blunder.

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Chhattisgarh: BJP Repeats its Performance of 2009 General Elections

Anupama Saxena¹

Chhattisgarh was carved out from Madhya Pradesh in November 2000. Like in Madhya Pradesh, politics in Chhattisgarh revolves around two major parties, namely the Indian National Congress (INC/Congress) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Traditionally Chhattisgarh had been the bastion of the Congress till 1984 with the exception of 1977 (*Table 1*). The BJP showed its presence in 1989 by winning 6 seats but could not win any seat in 1991. Since 1996 however Chhattisgarh has come to be identified as a strong fortress of the BJP with the party winning the majority of seats. The 2014 election was no different with the party winning 10 of the 11 seats in the state. In fact this is the third successive time that the BJP swept the Lok Sabha polls in Chhattisgarh winning all but one seat. The 2004 and 2009 elections had also thrown up the same result. Interestingly the only seat that the BJP could not win this time is Durg, a seat that the party had not lost since 1996. The BJP lost this seat to the Congress by 16,848 votes. Meanwhile the only seat that the party had lost in 2009, Korba, was won by it by a narrow margin of 4,265 votes. Another seat where the party just about managed to scrape through is Mahasamund where the BJP candidate defeated former chief minister Ajit Jogi of the Congress by merely 1,217 votes. However the remaining eight seats that the BJP won were won comfortably by the party. In six of them the party's margin of victory over the Congress went up compared to 2009, including Bilaspur where senior leader Karuna Shukla who had moved from the BJP to the Congress on the eve of the election lost by a margin of over 1.76 lakh votes. BJP's highest victory margin was recorded in Rajnandgaon where Chief Minister Raman Singh's son Abhishek won by 2.35 lakh votes. The BJP's overall vote share in the state was 48.7 percent, a gain of nearly four percentage points since the 2009 election (*Table 2*). More importantly the BJP gained about eight

¹ The author teaches political science in Guru Ghasidas University, Bilaspur.

Table 1
Winning Party in Parliamentary Constituencies in Chhattisgarh, 1951-2014

| Constituency | 1951 | 1957 | 1962 | 1967 | 1971 | 1977 | 1980 | 1984 | 1989 | 1991 | 1996 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 | 2014 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Bastar(ST) | IND | INC | INC | INC | INC | BLD | INC | INC | INC | INC | IND | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| Bilaspur | INC | INC | IND | INC | INC | BLD | INC | INC | BJP | INC | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| Durg | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | BLD | INC | INC | JD | INC | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | INC |
| Janjgir Champa (SC) | . | INC | INC | INC | INC | BLD | INC | INC | BJP | INC | BJP | INC | INC | BJP | BJP |
| Kanker(ST) | . | . | . | BIS | INC | BLD | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| Mahasamund | INC | . | INC | INC | INC | BLD | INC | INC | JD | INC | INC | INC | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| Raigarh(ST) | . | . | RJP | INC | INC | BLD | INC | INC | BJP | INC | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| Raipur | . | INC | INC | INC | INC | BLD | INC | INC | BJP | INC | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| Rajnandgaon | . | . | INC | INC | INC | BLD | INC | INC | BJP | INC | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| Sarangarh | . | . | . | . | INC | BLD | INC | INC | INC | INC | INC | BJP | BJP | . | -BJP |
| Surguja (ST) | INC | INC | . | INC | INC | BLD | INC | INC | BJP | INC | INC | INC | BJP | BJP | BJP |
| Korba(New) | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | INC |

Note: INC-Indian National Congress, BJP-Bharatiya Janata Party, BJS-Bharatiya Jana Sangha, BLD - Bharatiya Lokdal, JD - Janata Dal;
Source: Election Commission of India

Table 2
Chhattisgarh Lok Sabha Election Results 2014

| Party | Seats Contested | Seats Won | Seat Change from 2009 Lok Sabha Poll | Vote (%) | Vote Change from 2009 Lok Sabha Poll | Vote Change from 2013 Assembly Poll |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Congress | 11 | 1 | 0 | 38.37 | 1.06 | -1.92 |
| BJP | 11 | 10 | 0 | 48.74 | 3.72 | +8.45 |
| AAP | 10 | 0 | 0 | 1.15 | 1.15 | +1.15 |
| BSP | 11 | 0 | 0 | 2.40 | -2.12 | -1.87 |
| NOTA | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1.83 | 1.83 | -1.24 |
| Other Parties | 168 | 0 | 0 | 7.51 | -5.64 | -4.57 |

Source: ECI data compiled by CSDS Data Unit.

percentage point votes compared to the Vidhan Sabha election which had been held in the state five months before the Lok Sabha polls and which had seen a close contest between the BJP and the Congress with the former emerging victorious. The Congress's state-wide vote share stood at 38.4 percent votes, a marginal gain of one percentage point since 2009 but down by about two percentage points since the Vidhan Sabha election. Hence the vote difference between the BJP and the Congress which was less than one percentage point in the Vidhan Sabha election widened to ten percentage points in the Lok Sabha election. In a strictly bipolar state, this difference in vote share is huge.

Explaining BJP's Victory

With a popular and recently re-elected state government in power, the outcome could not have been very different from what has emerged. In fact the most obvious reason for the BJP's comfortable victory in Chhattisgarh is the occurrence of Lok Sabha elections so soon after Assembly elections, hence giving the BJP an opportunity to capitalize on the honeymoon period of a ruling party. In 2004 and 2009 too the situation had been the same as Lok Sabha elections had been held within five months of the assembly elections. The result then too was no different.

Survey evidence indicates high satisfaction with the re-elected Raman Singh government. A Pre Poll study conducted in Chhattisgarh (as part of the larger National Election Study (NES) 2014) by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) reveals that the satisfaction of voters with the Raman Singh's government was as high as 80 percent. As compared to this, satisfaction with the performance of the UPA government at the Centre was less at 60 percent (Table 3).

Not only did the BJP benefit from the popularity of the Raman Singh regime but it also seems to have benefitted from Narendra Modi's appeal in the state to some extent. When people were asked to name their choice for prime minister in an open ended question, 31 percent took the name of Modi while 20 percent said Rahul Gandhi (Table 4). It must be added however that Modi's popularity in Chhattisgarh was less than the overall

Table 3
Voter's satisfaction with Central and State governments

| | Performance of UPA govt. (%) | Performance of State BJP govt. (%) |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Satisfied | 60 | 80 |
| Dissatisfied | 23 | 10 |
| Don't know/Can't say/No response | 17 | 10 |

Source: National Election Study 2014 (Pre poll) conducted by CSDS; Sample size: 529

national average of 36 percent. On the other hand Rahul Gandhi's popularity in the state was higher than the national average of 14 percent. Nevertheless the fact is that in Chhattisgarh too Modi was comfortably ahead of Gandhi and his popularity contributed in some measure to the BJP's victory. In fact it can be argued that what worked for the BJP in Chhattisgarh was that both its state and national level leadership were popular in the state.

Table 4
Choice for Prime Minister

| Leader | Chhattisgarh (%) | All India (%) |
|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Narendra Modi | 31 | 36 |
| Rahul Gandhi | 20 | 14 |
| Sonia Gandhi | 4 | 3 |
| Manmohan Singh | 3 | 2 |
| Any other BJP leader | 6 | 1 |
| Any other Cong leader | 2 | - |
| Others | 1 | 15 |
| Don't know/Can't say/No response | 33 | 29 |

Source: National Election Study 2014 (Post poll) conducted by CSDS; Sample size in Chhattisgarh: 577; Sample size for All-India: 22295

The inability of the Congress party to relate to the voters has been the another important reason for BJP's victory. This is starkly brought out by the fact that even various Central government schemes that benefitted the

underprivileged voters were identified with the state government. Those who benefitted from schemes like MNERGA, National Rural Health Mission etc. gave the credit to the state government for these benefits (Table 5). This failure of the Congress party ensured that the popular state government and the image of Narendra Modi would bring a near-total victory for the BJP.

Table 5
Beneficiaries of welfare give credit to State government

| Scheme | Benefitted (%) | Credit to Central Govt. (among the beneficiaries) (%) | Credit to State Govt. (among the beneficiaries) (%) |
|---|----------------|---|---|
| Scheme for building a home (Indira/Rajiv Awas Yojana) | 14 | 39 | 37 |
| Employment Guarantee scheme (MNREGA) | 47 | 22 | 51 |
| Free Medical Facilities (National Rural Health Mission) | 36 | 11 | 68 |
| Pension money (old age, widow, disabilities etc.) | 19 | 10 | 54 |

Source: NES 2014 (Post poll) conducted by CSDS; Sample size: 577

Table 6
Vote by Caste and Community in the 2014 Election

| Caste/Community | Congress (%) | BJP (%) | BSP (%) | Others (%) | BJP's gains / losses since 2009 | BJP's gains / losses since 2013 |
|-----------------|--------------|---------|---------|------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Upper Caste | 18 | 46 | Neg | 14 | -6 | -2 |
| OBC | 37 | 56 | Neg | 12 | -1 | +6 |
| Dalit | 42 | 37 | 16 | 7 | +6 | +7 |
| Adivasi | 45 | 44 | Neg | 10 | +4 | +11 |

Source: NES 2014 (Post poll) conducted by CSDS; Sample size: 577; Gains and losses for BJP have been calculated based on Post Poll surveys conducted in Chhattisgarh by CSDS in 2009 and 2013.

Another interesting finding is that defying the patterns in many other parts of the country, the young voters in the state favoured the Congress more than the BJP. Over half the respondents in the age group of 18-25 years voted for Congress as against 40 percent voting for BJP. However the BJP was way ahead of the Congress among the rest of the voters, particularly the middle aged ones (Table 7).

Table 7
Vote by Age in the 2014 Lok Sabha Election

| Age Group | Congress (%) | | BJP % | |
|-------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| | Chhattisgarh | All India | Chhattisgarh | All India |
| 18-22 yrs | 53 | 17 | 40 | 36 |
| 23-25 yrs | 54 | 20 | 41 | 32 |
| 26-35 yrs | 37 | 20 | 47 | 33 |
| 36-45 yrs | 42 | 18 | 50 | 30 |
| 46-55 yrs | 21 | 20 | 61 | 30 |
| 56 yrs. and above | 28 | 20 | 51 | 28 |

Note: The rest of the voters voted for other parties or for NOTA;

Source: NES 2014 conducted by CSDS

Even in terms of Gender, Chhattisgarh defied the national pattern of voting. Whereas in other parts of the country a greater proportion of men voted for the BJP than women, in Chhattisgarh it was the other way around (Table 8). Women favoured the BJP more than men. The gap between the two was of two percentage points. The support for the Congress among men and women was nearly the same.

Table 8
Vote by Gender in the 2014 Election

| Gender | Congress (%) | BJP (%) |
|---------------------|--------------|---------|
| Chhattisgarh | | |
| Men | 39 | 48 |
| Women | 38 | 50 |
| All-India | | |
| Men | 19 | 33 |
| Women | 19 | 29 |

Note: The rest of the voters voted for other parties or NOTA;

Source: NES 2014 conducted by CSDS

Conclusion

To conclude, the outcome of the Lok Sabha election in Chhattisgarh was both similar and different from the rest of the country. It was similar in the sense that the BJP won a sweeping victory in the state like it did in several Hindi-speaking states. It was however different in terms of the social basis of voting for the BJP. For instance, unlike nationally, the BJP did better among elderly voters than the young voters in Chhattisgarh. Also the party's performance among women was better than its performance among men in the state which was not the case nationally. Moreover, whereas upper caste support for the BJP went up in many other states, in Chhattisgarh it actually went down. Modi's appeal too was not as strong in Chhattisgarh as it was in the rest of the country, even though he was ahead of his political rivals. What was also different about the Chhattisgarh election from several other states is the context in which it took place. For the third

time in a row Lok Sabha elections in the state took place soon after the assembly polls and this seems to have worked most in the BJP's favour which was the ruling party. The opposition Congress's inability to take credit for schemes launched by the Manmohan Singh government coupled with the demoralization of the party workers following a third successive assembly election defeat also helped the BJP score a decisive victory in the state.

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