

## The 2014 Parliamentary Elections in Haryana: A Paradigm Shift

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The unprecedented success of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2014 parliamentary elections marked a significant shift in India's electoral politics. The party achieved a clear majority in the Lok Sabha on its own. Haryana is one of the states of the North-Western region where it did exceedingly well by winning seven of the eight seats it had contested and by securing 34.7 percent votes. However, its alliance partner Haryana Janhit Congress (HJC) lost the two seats it contested to the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD). The INLD won two out of the ten seats it contested and its vote share increased to 24 percent, a gain of close to nine percent as compared to the last Lok Sabha Election<sup>2</sup>. The Indian National Congress could win only one out of the ten seats it contested. It retained the Rohtak seat where Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda's son Deepender Singh won for a third consecutive term. This has been the only consolation for the party in Haryana. The party's vote share declined by close to nineteen percentage points. The BSP too was in the fray in all the ten seats in the state but could not win a seat. A new entrant in Haryana, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) also contested all the ten seats but was unable to ensure the victory of any of its candidates. The results of this election are politically significant as they mark an important departure from the past and could also impact assembly elections in the state scheduled for October 2014.

The Congress had to face twin anti-incumbency in Haryana - there was dissatisfaction among people with the UPA government at the centre owing to price rise and large scale corruption, on the one hand, and dissatisfaction with the state government on account of a range of factors,

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<sup>2</sup> While comparing the electoral outcome we must keep in mind the fact that there was an alliance between the BJP and the INLD in the 2009 parliamentary elections. Both had contested five seats each.

Table 1  
Haryana - 2014 Lok Sabha Election Results

Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Seat Change from 2009	Vote (%)	Vote Change from 2009
Congress	10	1	-8	22.92	-18.85
NDA	10	7	6	40.86	18.76
BJP	8	7	7	34.74	22.65
HJC	2	0	-1	6.12	-3.89
INLD	10	2	2	24.36	8.58
AAP	10	0	0	4.25	4.25
BSP	10	0	0	4.58	-11.16
NOTA	10	0	0	0.30	0.30
Other Parties	190	0	0	2.73	-1.88

Source: ECI data compiled by CSDS Data Unit.

on the other. The success of Narendra Modi in projecting himself as the Prime Ministerial candidate of the BJP also appears to have had an impact in Haryana. The voters considered him a better choice than Rahul Gandhi in the plebiscitary election that was witnessed in 2014. The issues of mis-governance, corruption and large scale land scams with the alleged involvement of Robert Vadra, son-in-law of Sonia Gandhi, adversely impacted the prospects of the Congress in Haryana. This issue of land scams badly exposed the state government which was unable to offer a credible defence. The situation worsened for the Congress on account of the intense infighting within the party and frequent attacks by the state leaders against chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda. The Hooda government was charged with nepotism, favouritism in government jobs and lop-sided development in Haryana by his detractors led by Chaudhary Birender Singh<sup>3</sup>. They claimed that inclusive growth was a sham and almost everything had been

<sup>3</sup> As per information obtained through the RTI, Rohtak got 1237 development projects out of which 1082 were completed. While 47 projects were started in Panchkula but only 16 got completed. This shows the extent of inter district discrimination and large bias in favour of Rohtak, the home district of Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda. The Tribune, Chandigarh, 17 August, 2014 pp 12-13.



diverted to Rohtak, the home district of the chief minister. The state, they alleged, was being run like a fiefdom. According to them certain areas were getting step-motherly treatment and only one city had been always flooded with funds and projects. Besides, a number of senior leaders deserted the party on the eve of elections<sup>4</sup>. The National Election Study (NES) conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) reveals that only 34 percent of the respondents believed that the Hooda government had done good work in all the regions of Haryana while 46 percent thought otherwise.

To add to the challenges that the Congress Government in Haryana faced, it had been unsuccessful in de-escalating the Jat-Dalit conflict<sup>5</sup>. In Mirchpur village of Hisar district, a group of Jats had resorted to arson in a Dalit locality in 2010, leading to the death of people. Moreover, the decision of the UPA government to provide reservation to Jats in education and government jobs through a special backward quota of 10 percent could have turned many sections among other castes against the Congress in Haryana. The failure of the government to restore the old social fabric further ignited the existing casteism in politics and led to the virtual alienation of non-Jats from the Congress. This too contributed to the dismal performance of the party. The strategy of polarizing the Jats in favour of the Congress did not succeed despite extension of reservations to them. On the contrary, it proved counter-productive as it eroded the non-Jat base of the party. The uncontrolled bureaucracy, the poor delivery system, land

4 Many senior leaders like Dharambir Singh from Bhiwani and Rao Inderjeet Singh from Gurgaon deserted the Congress on the eve of elections. Some others like Birender Singh and Kumari Selja who stayed back were apprehensive about the Congress prospects. So much so that even a senior leader like Kumari Selja chose to find her way into the Rajya Sabha instead of re-contesting the Ambala Lok Sabha seat that she had won in 2009.

5 A Parliamentary Committee on the welfare of SC and ST, claimed in its report last year that the "dignity and morale of the SCs in the state are completely eroded due to the high-handedness of the dominant caste in Haryana. More alarming is the fact that despite just two percent in the population, Haryana, is the 12th most criminal state in the country as per the data of the National Crime Records Bureau. The Tribune, Chandigarh, 17th August, 2014.

scams and corruption charges and desertion by the senior leaders were the factors that contributed to the defeat of the Congress.

On the contrary, the BJP offered the voters a Prime Ministerial candidate who was in clear contrast to what was presented by the Congress and the INLD. The impact of Modi factor was evident from the fact that all four defectors who had left the Congress and joined the BJP on the eve of elections won with large margins<sup>6</sup>. In fact, giving tickets to former senior Congress leaders strategically suited the BJP. The party also distributed tickets keeping in view the caste composition of various parliamentary constituencies. For example, a Punjabi was given the ticket from Punjabi dominated Karnal and a Gujar from the Gujar dominated Faridabad. The new BJP candidate replaced a Jat sitting MP who was a three term member. The BJP registered a record win despite strong resentment in local units of the party in several constituencies due to tickets to outsiders. It led in all the 27 assembly segments of Faridabad, Karnal and Ambala parliamentary constituencies. The BJP candidate from Faridabad Krishan Pal Gujjar won with a record margin of 4,66,873 vote. The average victory margin of the BJP candidates in the state was over 1.5 lakh.

In 2009 the BJP had an alliance with the INLD<sup>7</sup>. This time around it forged an alliance with the Haryana Janhit Congress. This gave a clear message that it is no more a junior partner but leads the alliance. The BJP's decision to contest from 8 seats leaving two to the HJC, underscored this fact. The BJP also asserted its supremacy by contesting from Karnal which had earlier been allotted to the alliance partner. The HJC was forced to exchange it with Sirsa despite the fact that it had no base in that INLD

6 Rao Inderjit Singh alleged discrimination in the development as well as had exposed Robert Vadra in a land scam in Haryana, joined BJP. Dharambir who had joined the party a day before in Bhiwani also got the BJP ticket. Ramesh Kaushik and Raj Kumar Saini, the former Congress leaders too got tickets from Sonapat and Kurukshetra parliamentary constituencies respectively after defecting to the BJP.

7 Before the Lok Sabha Election on April 10th 2014, both, HJC and INLD tried best to enter in an alliance with the BJP. However, ultimately the HJC succeeded in it as the state leadership of BJP did not want to have an alliance with the INLD on account of bitter experience in the past.



stronghold. The BJP also adopted the strategy of raising national issues instead of banking upon the regional ones, to clearly focus attention on their Prime Ministerial candidate.

It is important to record that the Haryana regional outfit - INLD, once again asserted its presence after the death of its founder (Chaudhuri Devi Lal), by winning two seats and being the runner up in three parliamentary constituencies. The INLD launched a very aggressive election campaign with an effective poll management. This enabled it to polarize a sizeable section of Jat votes in its favour. The INLD workers conveyed to the people that their leaders had been jailed for providing jobs to unemployed youth as a result of a conspiracy by the Congress leadership. This created a strong sympathy wave for the party and helped it in regaining its traditional support base. The victory of its candidate in Hisar, Dushyant Chautala against HJC's chief Kuldeep Bishnoi could be attributed to this factor. The non-Jat card used by Bishnoi, appeared to evoke a counter reaction from the Jats. Though he succeeded in polarizing a chunk of non-Jat voters, the Jat voters too got consolidated behind the INLD<sup>8</sup>. The polling trends suggest that caste continued to be a significant factor in determining the voting behavior in rural areas of Haryana. What added to the advantage of the INLD was the fact that an alliance partner of the BJP in Punjab, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), supported its (INLD) candidates in Haryana.

The Bahujan Samaj Party which had secured an impressive vote share in 2009 parliamentary elections on account of its formula of social engineering and projection of its supremo Mayawati as a prospective prime

<sup>8</sup> In the rural areas of Hisar parliamentary constituency, the consolidation of Jat voters in favour of INLD could be assessed from the fact that the die-hard INLD workers had put plates on their bikes which read "I am a Jat I am for INLD". The Tribune, Chandigarh, 30 March, 2014. Even on the day of counting an INLD supporter stated that "Jisne Bhi Jat Ko Lalkara hai wo to Hara Hi Hara Hai" (He who has challenged a Jat has always been defeated). The Tribune, Chandigarh, 17 May, 2014. Moreover, the Jats rallied behind INLD hoping that victory in the election will ensure release of O.P. Chautala from Jail. They could also perceive him as the future Chief Minister of Haryana. Moreover, for them it was not just an election for a M.P. It had assumed the form of an election for the office of Chief Minister because Kuldeep Bishnoi had been projected as the Chief Minister of the BJP-HJC alliance for the first half of the five year term.

minister of India failed to evoke significant interest in Haryana this time around. Its support base dropped from over fifteen percent to just five percent - a big loss of over ten percentage points. Its core supporters, the Dalits, drifted towards the Congress.

A new entrant to the politics of Haryana was the Aam Aadmi Party. Having tasted success in Delhi, it tried tested the political waters in neighbouring Haryana. It was not able to make deep inroads on account of the faulty choice of candidates and the negative impact created by its Delhi government resigning within 49 days of coming to power. All its candidates, including the party ideologue Yogendra Yadav, lost their security deposits. The party could get just over two percent of the votes in the state. Lack of an organizational base and the failure of the party to provide an effective alternative agenda to the electorate also contributed to its drubbing.

Unlike recent parliamentary elections, the 2014 poll could be termed as a wave election. The Modi wave appeared to have spread across the state. This is substantiated by the NES 2014 data which showed that Modi was the first choice of nearly 48 percent of the respondents in Haryana. He was not only the first choice as the prime ministerial candidate but was also perceived as an effective leader who could solve India's problems. On an average, 37 percent voters thought that he cares for the people, was reliable, could get things done and could also get along with other leaders of the party. It is interesting to note that almost an equal number of respondents felt that he is was an experienced leader and was best suited to address the issues of women empowerment, development of the country and to control price rise. He was also viewed as the best for the upliftment of the Dalits and Adivasis, and for controlling the corruption. Moreover, the pre-poll survey also made it clear that almost 40 percent of the respondents were ready to absolve him of the charge of inciting Gujarat riots and considered him more acceptable than the former prime minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Apart from the support for Narendra Modi on a range of issues concerning the country, over one third considered the BJP to be a better party for administration, with the Congress securing the



Table 2

## BJP Gains Among the Upper Castes, OBC Communities and Dalits

Caste/Community-wise swings for...	Congress Vote Share 2014	INLD Vote Share 2014	BJP Vote Share 2014*	BJP (Gain/Loss Since 2009)
Jats	21	54	19	-5
Upper castes	12	14	51	+ 33
OBC	13	24	43	+30
Dalits	41	17	19	+15

Note: All figures are in percentages; \*figures of BJP exclude the vote share of its 2014 alliance partner HJC.

Source: National Election Study (NES) 2014; Weighted Data Sets. Sample size - 673.

support of just two out of every ten. The BJP was also ahead of the Congress as people's preferred choice when it came to good leadership and protecting national security.

The BJP succeeded in expanding its support across regions castes in these elections. It expanded its support among both the upper castes and lower castes, except the Jats. NES 2014 data reveals that over half the Upper Caste and OBC votes went in favour of the BJP alliance (See Table 2). Its Dalit vote share also increased substantially as compared to 2009.

The BJP also did well among the first time voters. Close to half the first time voters favoured the BJP with around one fourth voting for the INLD. Though the party did not do well in the Jat belt, it was able to make small but decisive inroads among the young Jat voters, some of whom appear to have been swayed by the Modi wave. The BJP had greater support in urban areas though it also increased its vote share in villages. It tended to draw more support from the rich and middle classes while the Congress continued to find favour with the lower middle class and the dalits. The INLD secured a major share of the Jat and Sikh vote<sup>9</sup>. Findings from NES

2014 show that more than half of those who had high media exposure voted for the BJP. The BJP remained the first choice for those persons also, who had some sort of media exposure.

It may be tentatively concluded that the rout of the Congress, the astounding performance by the BJP and the recovery of the INLD are bound to influence the dynamics of state politics in Haryana in the Assembly elections. The BJP may contest the assembly poll alone and opt for a post poll alliance. It may break the alliance with the HJC. Even if the BJP keeps its alliance with the HJC intact, Bishnoi would be no more than a marginalized ally. The formation of new political outfits in Haryana by two Congress rebels may have some impact on the state politics by giving the Congress a greater chance of winning in multi-cornered contests. Last but not the least, the BJP's decision to go to assembly polls without a leader in Haryana where politics mostly has been personality based may also have an adverse effect on its electoral performance. In 2009 parliamentary elections they voted overwhelmingly for the Congress by giving it 9 of the 10 seats. In the Assembly elections that followed, the Congress barely managed to win 40 out of 90 Assembly seats. The nature of alliances, the political context of the electoral contest and the leadership options offered seem to influence voters when exercising their franchise. The social factors and caste preferences also cannot be lost sight of. The emerging social coalitions and the political re-alignments will play a critical role in charting the course of politics in the state.

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<sup>9</sup> On April 5, 2014 Sukhbir Singh Badal, Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab, had promised at a rally in Kurukshetra to constitute a separate committee, which would look into the affairs of the Gurudwara's in the state for the Sikhs of Haryana. As a result of this declaration, Jagdish Singh Jhinda, who had been demanding separate HSGPC for Haryana also extended his support to Chautalas. Consequently a major chunk of Sikhs voted for the INLD candidates.



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## 2014 Lok Sabha Elections in Punjab: Emergence of Aam Aadmi Party

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The most significant aspect of the 2014 Parliamentary elections in Punjab<sup>1</sup> was the unexpected response of the electorates to the debutant Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). The party, which contested seats across India, could win only four seats and all these happened to be from Punjab. Thus Punjab was among the few big states like Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and West Bengal, which deviated from the national trend in favour of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The ruling SAD-BJP combine in the state managed to add only two seats to its 2009 tally by winning six Lok Sabha seats with SAD winning four and the BJP winning two seats respectively, with the remaining three seats going to the Congress (*See Table 1*).

Table 1  
2014 Parliamentary Election Results in Punjab

Party	Seats Contested	Seats won	Change from 2009	Vote (In %)	Change since 2009 (In %)
Congress	13	3	-5	33	-12.23
SAD (Badal)	10	4	-	26.4	-7.25
BJP	03	2	+1	8.6	-1.09
AAP	13	4	+ 4	24.5	24.5

### Significance of AAP Success

What underlines the significance of AAP's amazing electoral success is that Haryana was the only state apart from Delhi where the fledgling party,

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