

the reluctance of Vijay Bahuguna who was very unceremoniously removed just before the Lok Sabha election. He was quite annoyed by his removal and had made it clear that neither he nor any one from his family would contest in the election. The Congress high Command was interested in senior Bahuguna for the Tehri Lok Sabha seat because of his chances of winning but Bahuguna wanted the ticket for this seat for his son Saket and once his son's name was announced Bahuguna's ego was satisfied. While this delay had left limited time for canvassing for the Congress' candidates in all the three seats particularly the Pauri and Tehri seats which are spread over in a hilly terrain, it also gave a wrong message to the masses about the seriousness of the Congress party for contesting this election.

Actually in Uttarakhand both the national parties were in a kind of predicament during the elections. While on the one hand Congress party on account of the anti incumbency factor was more or less assured about its defeat on the other hand BJP on account of the Modi undercurrent was somewhat assured and relaxed about winning all the seats in the election. The Bahujan Samaj Party, Samajwadi Party and the Aam Admi Party which was being projected as an alternative to the BJP and Congress were totally wiped out in this election. Unfortunately, this election also saw the eclipse and departure of the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD), the political party, which was created to raise the issue of the creation of Uttarakhand state, from the political scenario of Uttarakhand, because of its divisions and factionalism, which is quite regrettable.

Himachal Pradesh Lok Sabha Elections 2014: BJP Rides High on Modi Wave

Ramesh K. Chauhan*

The outcomes of 2014 Lok Sabha elections are significant in many ways both at state and national level. The decisive mandate at the national level after the gap of thirty years enabled the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) to form a government on its own strength. An all time high polling (66.04%) also was encashed by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) favourably, by securing 31 percent votes, an all time high. The visible impact of 'vote for change' was also witnessed in favour of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) in the small hilly state of Himachal Pradesh. For the first time, the BJP not only succeeded in winning all the four Lok Sabha seats, it also increased its vote-share in this election.

The election results turned out as a nightmare to the ruling Congress party in the state with the electoral humiliation, being a party in power in the state. The electoral politics in Himachal witnessed a reversal of the past trend and this indicates that there was a wave for change and alongside the national trend the people of Himachal Pradesh also casted their choice in favour of the BJP.¹

There can be many explanations for the dismal performance of the congress party in Himachal Pradesh but the Bhartiya Janta Party's (BJP's) performance in terms of seats won and votes polled are significantly high in this election.² In Himachal, like many other states such as Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Gujrat and Delhi, the BJP made a clean sweep for the first time. Has this electoral humiliation to the Congress party caused due to the Modi factor or were the people inclined to vote for change? The main objective of the paper is to discuss the factors that led to the loss to the Congress party and the success to the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) in Himachal Pradesh.

* Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, H.P. University, Shimla-171 005 (H.P.). rkchpu@gmail.com

Table-1
Performance of Political Parties in Himachal Pradesh, 2014 Elections

Party	Contested	Seats won	Change from 2009 (%)	Vote (%)	Change from 2009 (%)
Congress	4	0	-1	40.68	-4.93
BJP	4	4	1	53.35	3.77
AAP	4	0	0	2.04	2.04
NOTA	4	0	0	0.94	0.94
Other Parties	30	0	0	2.99	-1.82

Source: Analysis of ECI Data by CSDS Data Unit.

In order to ascertain why people voted the way they did, paper has been divided into three broader parts. The first part deals with the reversal of past trends in the state in this election, in the second part the combined effect of Modi - wave and anti-incumbency has been explained, which has been followed by explanation of the verdict based on the empirical evidences i.e., the NES post- poll survey, 2014, also conducted in Himachal Pradesh by CSDS.

The two-party competitive politics in the state is well entrenched since 1990s, no third or regional party has gained an electoral competitive strength so far. (Chauhan & Ghosh, 2004) The bi-polar contest between the BJP and the Congress in Himachal is also evident from the fact that the combined votes polled to these two major parties in 2009 and 2014 Lok Sabha elections are about 95 percent and 94 percent respectively, which clearly shows that the gains and loss in terms of votes and seats mainly revolve around the two dominant parties loss of seats and vote percentage revolves mainly around the two parties.

The polling for the Lok Sabha election in Himachal held on 7th May, recorded 64.42 % of the valid vote which is the second highest from the state's point of view.³ Party wise performance shows that the BJP gained about four percent from 2009, whereas a loss of about 5 percent in the Congress vote bank resulted in losing all the seats.

Reversal of the Past Trend

Departing from the well established trends in the previous Lok Sabha elections (1991-2009) in the state, this time a party in power (Congress) lost all the seats. During the 2009 Lok Sabha election BJP was in power in the state, it utilised its energy and resources to win three out of four Lok Sabha seats, while nationally the tally of seats of the BJP declined. (Chauhan & Ghosh, 2009, pro incumbency help BJP). This time around, the Congress failed to take the due advantage of a party in power in the state. Till 1989 Congress remained a dominant player in the political arena of Himachal Pradesh, it was only in the nineties after the second democratic upsurge (Yadav, 1999), the Congress dominant system was challenged by the BJP in the state and

with the passage of time it emerged as an alternative. This resulted in a competitive era of politics in a bi-polar context. During its two terms in power (1998-2003, 2007-12), BJP expanded its organisational and electoral vote base in the state.⁴ This is evident from the fact that in 2009 Lok Sabha election, Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) grabbed the Shimla seat from the Congress and also succeeded in doing so in 2014 in Mandi, as both Shimla and Mandi were considered as strongholds of Congress party; on the other hand Kangra and Hamirpur are considered as the strongholds of BJP and Congress could not succeed in taking over these seats especially Hamirpur seat, from the BJP, despite being in power.⁵

In 2009 Lok Sabha election, winning three seats, the margin of percentage of votes between Congress and BJP was about 4 percentage and in the 2014 elections this margin has further multiplied by about more than three time i.e., about 13 percent. One possible explanation to the drastic erosion in the Congress support base may be due to the fact that the Lok Sabha elections since 1991 did not witness a nation-wide wave for change in favour of a particular party as has been witnessed in this election. The nature of political participation and electoral issues in Himachal remained confined with the state-specific issues and leadership. This general election has been contested in a visible nationwide mood of vote for change and the BJP, channelised its energy and organizational strength in terms of projecting a prime ministerial candidate, marketing the image of Modi in a very significant and strategic manner, therefore, got the dividends.

Explaining the Verdict

Based on the findings of the post poll study and the actual results of 2014 Lok Sabha election, in the state of Himachal., it is evident that the BJP's margin of victory in all the four parliamentary seats increased due to the popularity of the leadership, failure of congress party on several fronts and better organizational support base of the BJP.

Parliamentary constituency⁶ wise analysis of the election results indicate that in Kangra PC BJP led in all the 17 assembly segments, whereas in Hamirpur it succeeded in 16 out of 17 assembly segments, from Shimla,

Table-II
Parliamentary Seats wise Performance of BJP and Congress Party in Himachal Pradesh

Parliamentary Constituency Number and Name	Contested	Won	Votes Polled	Out of Valid Votes	%age 2014	%age 2009
Bhartiya Janata Party						
1. Kangra	1	1	45613	790741	57.69	48.69
2. Mandi	1	1	362824	719903	50.40	45.86
3. Hamirpur	1	1	448035	828732	54.06	53.47
4. Shimla (SC)	1	1	385973	729969	52.88	50.42
Total	4	4	1652995	3069345	53.85	49.58
Indian National Congress						
1. Kangra	1	0	286091	790741	36.18	45.55
2. Mandi	1	0	322968	719903	44.86	47.82
3. Hamirpur	1	0	349632	828732	42.19	43.06
4. Shimla (SC)	1	0	301786	729969	41.34	56.99
Total	4	0	1260477	3069345	41.34	45.61

Source: H.P. State Election Department, Shimla. The data compiled by the author.

BJP led in 14, whereas from Mandi took the lead in 12 assembly segments. Further, BJP veteran leader Shanta Kumar who contested from the Kangra seat won with a record margin of 1,70,072 votes (margin of 21.5 percent votes), despite the fact that a BJP-rebel candidate and former M.P. from BJP, Rajan Sushant contested as an AAP candidate, but failed to make any dent in the BJP's vote bank.⁷ From Hamirpur Loksabha seat Anurag Thakur, the BJP candidate won with 98403 votes (margin of 11.87 percent votes), here also congress fielded Rajinder Rana, a former independent MLA and a BJP-rebel, Rajinder Rana, not only lost this election but also his wife who contested for the assembly by-election on the congress ticket, also lost the seat to the BJP.

From Shimla (SC) seat the BJP's sitting M.P, Virender Kashyap, successfully maintained its lead on 14 out of 17 assembly segments, a clear reflection of the fact that the BJP has made a clear cut in-roads into the congress bastion (**Chauhan & Ghosh, 2009**). The Congress candidate from the Shimla seat, a sitting MLA from Rohru, assembly segment was a political light weight and heavily depended on the popularity and strength of the chief minister Virbhadr Singh but his magic did not work this time.

In the Mandi parliamentary constituency, although BJP fielded a first timer Ram Swaroop Sharma as its candidate having no past electoral experience, against the sitting Congress MP Pratibha Singh the wife of Virbhadr Singh, who won the June 2013 Lok Sabha by-election with a margin of 1,36,727 votes and led in 16 out of 17 assembly segments, was overconfident of repeating the same. The result of 2014 general election for this seat surprised one and all in Himachal, because the stakes of the chief minister were high; the BJP candidate not only won with a comfortable margin of about 40000 votes, but also took a lead in 12 out of 17 assembly segments. In case of Mandi seat it was more a battle between the 'pariwar' and the 'family'; election surveys have clearly shown that the BJP candidate got a strong campaigning support from RSS and its sister organizations, on the other hand the Virbhadr Singh's family's credentials and political credibility were on test, Pariwar prevailed over the family in this election. In this election, the Congress high command gave a free hand

to the chief minister in fielding the candidates of his choice, despite this he failed to check the impact of Modi wave which was endorsed by him after the declaration of the result. In the bi-polar context, despite losing all the seats, Congress remained the runner up in all the Loksabha seats.

Modi Wave

Anti-incumbency was encashed and converted into the Modi wave by the BJP successfully, in this elections. Election surveys and statistics clearly establish the fact that the people were fed up with the ten years Congress led-UPA government at the centre. In Himachal Pradesh the state Congress Government riding on its electoral victory in 2012 assembly elections failed to sense the discontentment among the voters.. It is evident from the fact that the Chief Minister Virbhadr Singh failed to provide a lead to the congress candidate, even from his own assembly segment (Shimla Rural). The Congress party made tall promises during the assembly elections 2012, particularly to attract the young voters.⁸ Instead the state government under the leadership of Virbhadr Singh preferred to oblige many of his favourite former MLAs, Ministers and others by offering them lucrative positions, some equivalent to the status of a cabinet ministers, many have been appointed as chairman of various boards, corporations and different government bodies. Not only this a large number of favourite retired beurocrats have been re-employed on certain crucial administrative positions, significant from the point of view of running the government machinery, inviting the annoyance from the serving senior officers. These unpopular steps of the state government did not go well down to the common people as this has burdened the exchequer of otherwise fiscally weak state like Himachal.⁹

Further, The politics of vendetta, alleged charges of scams and scandals turning into a family feud between Virbhadr Singh and Dhumal during the past one and a half years diverted the state leadership from purposive, positive and constructive, people-oriented developmental; issues. Therefore the congress party in the state while facing the national anti-incumbency had also nothing specific to their credit in the Lok Sabha elections to neutralise the effect of Modi wave.

Table-III
Opinion About Prime Ministerial Candidates

Issues	Percentage			
	Manmohan Singh	Sonia Gandhi	Rahul Gandhi	Narendra Modi
Cares for people	1.4	.6	22.9	38.8
Reliable / trustworthy	2.1	.8	19.7	37.7
Who can get things done	1.4	.20	19.6	39.4
Who can take along other leaders of his party	1.7	1.6	20.6	36.1
Who do you think is experienced	9.1	5.2	10.5	36.0
Women empowerment	2.1	17.5	14.3	27.8
Best to address the development of the country	3.7	2.2	24.1	45.5
Best to control price rise	3.2	1.0	19.0	40.5
Best to address the upliftment of Dalit or Adivasi	3.5	.7	19	23.9
Controlling Corruption	1.0	1.4	17.0	37.9
Betterment of the Muslim community	2.2	2.3	26.0	23.5
National Security	.7	.8	22.6	40.3

Source: CSDS Post Poll Survey (NES-2014), Himachal Pradesh.
(Total Respondents 309, Figures not out of 100%)

Amidst this political scenario in the state, the declaration of Narender Modi as a PM candidate by the BJP, proved a turning point in favour of the BJP, while congress was struggling to find a decisive and strong leader at national level.. Narender Modi emerged as a popular and strong leader as an alternative. The national election, for the BJP turned out as a presidential campaign keeping the party and its ideology behind and pushing the image of prime ministerial candidate on the front. For the people of Himachal Pradesh Naraender Modi is a familiar face because he served as a general Secretary and party in-charge of the state and succeeded in forming the BJP's government in 1998 with Prem Kumar Dhumal as Chief Minister. The Modi mantra "Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas", development, good governance and decisive leadership emerged as the central issue during the election all over the country and Himachal was touched by this with a strong backup from the RSS and better media publicity, Modi succeeded in selling politically the Gujrat development al model to the rest of the states. The findings of the CSDS-Lokniti post poll study, conducted in Himachal Pradesh under NES-2014 reveals the impact of Modi factor on various parameters.

Besides this, the media exposure and the middle class outburst, tilted demographic dividend in favour of Modi further established the Modi wave and anti-incumbency as a factor, more strongly in this election.

Empirical Evidence

NES post poll survey 2014

The findings of the NES post poll survey reveals that predominant number of respondents i.e., 51.7% favoured Narender Modi as a prime ministerial candidate in Himachal Pradesh, only 25.7 % preferred Rahul Gandhi, the opinion about other, from the respondent's point of view is not significant.

When the voters were asked whether they prefer party or a candidate while casting their vote, an almost equal number of respondents while casting their votes preferred both, the party as well as the candidate. The most important consideration in the opinion of 21.4% respondents has been "good

Table-IV

Most Preferred Choice for Prime Ministerial Candidate

Prime Minister Candidate	Preference
Manmohan Singh	1.1%
Sonia Gandhi	1.2%
Rahul Gandhi	25.7%
Narendra Modi	51.7%

Source: CSDS Post Poll Survey (NES-2014), Himachal Pradesh.
(Total Respondents 309, Figures not out of 100%)

leadership” and 29 percent of the respondents, also supported the personality factor. For the issues such as trustworthiness / reliability and caring for the people, 38 percent respondents believed Narendra Modi as more reliable and 39 percent believes that he is more caring, as compared to 20 percent those believing that Rahul Gandhi is more reliable and trustworthy, and 23 percent believed that he cares for the people. Seeking the opinion of the respondents and the issues of national security, women empowerment, controlling price rise, development of the country, controlling corruption, on all these parameters Narendra Modi's popularity graph was much higher than the others.

Summing Up

Based on the actual results and the findings of the NES post poll survey the data clearly supports our point that a visible pro- BJP nationwide wave swept the 2014 Lok Sabha elections in favour of the BJP. A strong anti-incumbency against the Congress, weak and indecisive leadership and lack of enthusiasm amongst the voters and the party workers brought the grand old party to an all time low, not only nationally but in many states including Himachal Pradesh also. The significant aspect of the electoral outcomes has been stabilizing and decisive character of the mandate, to be culminated in an effective and all-inclusive party of governance i.e., BJP. Failing to meet the high expectations aroused during the elections and thereafter may also bounce back as strongly as has been the democratic dividend by the people of India to Narendra Modi in this election.

Notes

1. The trend in the previous Lok Sabha elections in the state clearly shows that whichever party remained in the power in the state, electorates have preferred to vote for that party.
2. BJP 's vote share in 2009 was 49.58%, which has increased upto 53.35%, a gain of about 4 percent votes.
3. In the 1998 Lok Sabha election, the polling percentage was 65.32 percent, the highest ever.
4. Earlier the BJP remained in power for two and a half years from 1990-92 and could not complete its full term.
5. Since 1998 the Hamirpur seat has continuously remained with the BJP.
6. Each parliamentary constituency in Himachal consists of 17 assembly segments.
7. Interestingly Shanta Kumar had withdrawn from electoral politics after his nomination to Rajya Sabha in 2008 from Himachal, but was directed by the Party high command particularly by Modi to contest in the 2014 Lok Sabha election.
8. Congress party promised in its manifesto, unemployment allowance to the educated youth, but cleverly deviated from its commitment.
9. Currently the state is under the financial burden of 35000 crores as debt.

References

- Ramesh K. Chauhan and S.N. Ghosh (2004). "Himachal Pradesh: Bipolar Contest, National Election Study 2004," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 51.
- Ramesh K. Chauhan and S.N. Ghosh (2009). "Himachal Pradesh: Pro-Incumbency Helps the BJP," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLIV, No. 39.
- Yogender Yadav (1999). "Electoral Politics in the Time of Change: India's Third Electoral System, 1989-99," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXIV, Nos. 34-35.