

# The General Election of 2014 and the Changes in the Indian Party System

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## **Abstract**

*General elections in India in present times are fought more on the plank of four Ps where populist policies promises to satisfy the pangs of hunger for comprehensive development and vigorous election campaign by a popular leader raising people's hopes and aspirations to achieve development for an developing nation. However, survival and continuity of the popular government depends on the symmetry between 'proclamations' and 'performance'. General elections also realign and reconfigure the party system.*

**Keywords:** General Election, Popularity, Populism, Performance, Positivity

## **1. Introduction**

The study of Indian party system has always been a matter of interest. Time and again the Indian party system has witnessed sea changes and reconfiguration. This adds to create quite a messy picture of the party system. The Indian party system not only produces surprising results but it is a critical mediating factor in producing social changes in the society. The Indian party system offers a menu of choices and acts as an instrument for social transformation realigns power structure and the basic dynamics of the society.

James Manor (2002) in his article '*Parties and the Party System*' has tried to uphold the impact of various factors such as defection, increase in mass consciousness, people's urge for development and the performance of a ruling government on the Indian party system and the subsequent changes in it due to these factors. Prakash Sarangi (2002) too has shown his interest in the study of the Indian party system which underwent several transformations. In his article entitled "*Economic Reforms and Changes in the Party System*" he has highlighted the fact that socio-economic development and the economic reforms that have been undertaken has a direct bearing on the nature of the party system. He has tried to show how this tends to influence the voting pattern and the behavior of the electorate. The change that has occurred in the role and attitude of the Congress and the transformation that the Congress has undergone has introduced significant changes in the nature of the party system in the country. Moreover as it seems the lack of any established political culture and the undying pangs of hunger for development has led to transitional shifts and transformation of the Indian party system. Its demise from the hegemonic position has brought significant changes in the nature of the party system. Since election is a very significant component of a democratic political structure

therefore with the aid of the electoral results an attempt has been made to show the reconfigurations in the party system.

In recent times the electoral logic of the Indian electorate irrespective of any class, caste, community and language has been mostly guided by their judgment on the records of parity between 'as promised' and 'as delivered'. The present electoral logic defies the claim of Lipset and Rokkan (1967)<sup>1</sup> that cleavages and conflicts influence the trajectory of the party system of a nation. On the contrary, besides cleavages and conflicts, "aspirations" (for growth, development, social justice and equity) of the populace translates into the party system and determines the trajectory of the party system at both the levels. The Indian population desires to rise above and shed the status of being citizen of an underdeveloped country. It wishes to tread the path of development or growth along with equity through various social welfare schemes. Hence as discernible in our opinion the Indian politics and the Indian party system is driven by four Ps *Popularity and Populism, Performance and Positivity*.

This trend consolidated most particularly since 2004 general election when people of this diversified country set aside issues such as caste, religion, language, *mandir-masjid* issue and gave a clear mandate for 'progress'. BJP's pro-rich policies, the issue of rising unemployment and the catastrophic impact of its fanatic Hindutva campaign prepared its graveyard for burial. This prompted the Indian voters to give another chance to the Congress party which portrayed itself as the party of the common man or '*aam admi*'. Once again the party which was not able to deliver was punished by the Indian voters. Hence, BJP-led NDA was ousted from power. Hence it became clear that the party which perform and enable the nation to tread the path of development will survive in a developing nation. This prompts the masses to give whimsical verdicts which ultimately pave the way towards politics of alliances, fronts and coalitions with no adherence or allegiance to any one single party. With every passing day India is witnessing participatory upsurge among all the sections of the society. These sections pass their valuable verdict as the course of politics demands.

In underdeveloped countries it is the performance of the government which determines its ability to come back to power. This has been the guiding factor for determining the mandate of the people in India since 1967. This article attempts to see how parameters like populism, personality, performance and ability is used to raise the hope of the electorates by a political party for a better tomorrow and how these parameters determines the outcome of the General Election. Besides, it deals with the most important strategies adopted by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to come to power with the 2014 Lok Sabha election. The article finally looks at how the performance of the different political parties in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha polls has cast its impact upon the nature of the Indian party system.

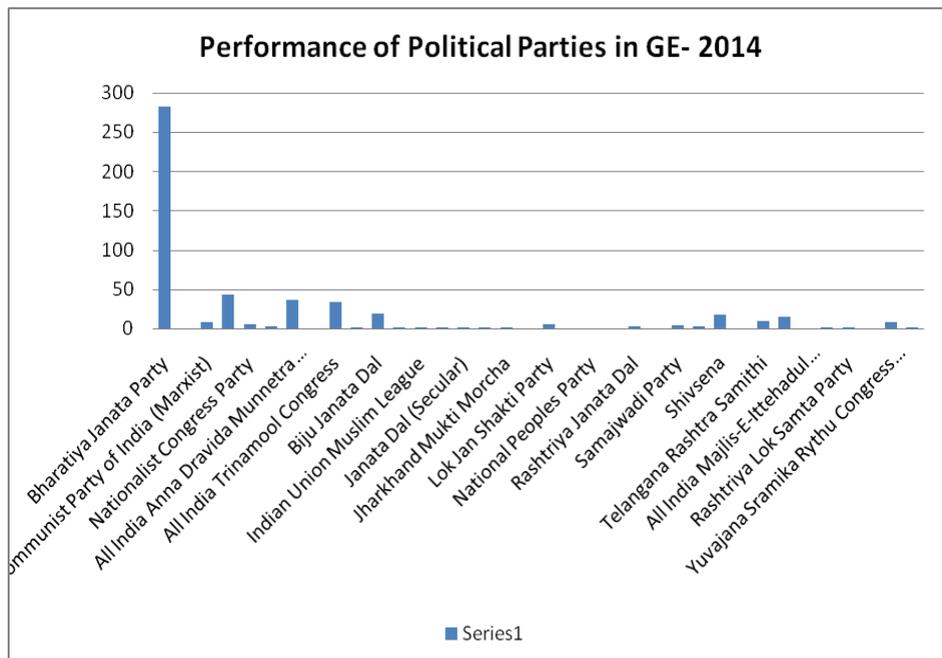
## **2. General Election to the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha**

The General Election to the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha held during April-May 2014 saw a comprehensive victory for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with a very pronounced verdict. Such a victory is bound to invite some interpretations as BJP is not dependent on any of its pre-poll allies to form the government at the Union level. The 2014 Lok Sabha election establishes the fact that the country craves and stands for 'development' and aspires for 'good governance'<sup>2</sup>. The strategy of alluring the electorate with the 'Gujarat development model' reaped benefits for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The series of corruption charges and scams, the issue of rising prices of essential commodities hurting the ordinary people, spiraling inflation, faltering growth, weakening currency, rising fiscal deficit, falling sensex, rising cases of crimes against women etc. wrested the chances of Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition government from coming to power for the third consecutive time.

### **2.1 Interpreting the General Elections 2014**

The election to the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha was unique in its own way as it for the time since independence produced a mandate that installed a 'party' at the central level with absolute majority that is otherwise marked for its indulgence in fanatic Hindu fundamentalism to rule a country that pledges in the name of secularism. Unprecedented popularity earned through rigorous media advertising, undying hope and unparalleled electoral campaign of Narendra Modi saw the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerging as the largest party by securing an absolute majority on its own with 282 seats polling 20.58 percent of votes and 31.34 percent of seats. BJP along with its allies secured 336 seats and Congress with its allies secured only 59 seats. Left front has secured 11 seats only. The nation has offered Modi and his government a chance to deliver growth and governance without any hurdles by reposing their faith in him and thereby bestowing him with maximum number of seats. The verdict shows that the nation has breached the gap between rural-urban, upper caste-lower caste, rich-poor, Hindu-Muslim and stood only for growth, progress and overall development of rural India besides the urban India.

Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) has been forced to bite the dust. Indian National Congress (INC) secured 44 seats polling 12.82 percent of votes and 19.52 percent of seats. INC was reduced to double digits for the first time in general election. In the 2009 Lok Sabha election it had secured 206 seats on its own. It secured 162 less seats in this election in comparison to 2009 Lok Sabha election. This is BJP's best ever performance in a general election since its inception in 1980. It has bagged 166 seats more than 2009 general election.



Source: Figures available from Election Commission of India website <http://eciresults.nic.in/>

## 2.2 Lok Sabha Polls 2014: Popularity and Populism, Performance and Positivity

The BJP resorted to its sole trump card Narendra Modi (who had been chosen consecutively thrice as the chief minister of Gujarat) and his well professed ‘Gujarat model’<sup>3</sup> of development for winning the 2014 election. The assembly elections that were held in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat resurged gallons of confidence within the Bharatiya Janata Party. BJP benefitted immensely from the fallouts of Congress-led UPA government which was voted back to power for the second time for its pro-people agendas. The second tenure has been a watershed for UPA II as it got riddled with series of corruption charges such as 2G spectrum scam, Commonwealth Games scam, Adarsh Housing society scam, Augusta Westland chopper scam, Railway bribery and coal mine scam that maligned its pro-people image based on which it had revived itself to the centre stage with the 14<sup>th</sup> general election. These cases of corruption caused huge losses amounting to crores of rupees to the national exchequer and this antagonized the common man. Rising cases of crimes against women questioned the administrative credibility of the UPA II government.

The pangs of hunger for development and better governance compelled the Indian electorate to vote for a change in government from Congress-led UPA to a BJP-led government<sup>4</sup>. The crux for survival for any government in

power in a developing country like India which is always yearning for progress and massive development in all the parameters is to 'perform' and translate rhetoric into intent. The corrupt image of the Congress and DMK have contributed negatively towards the electoral fortune of the Congress led UPA coalition and had produced serious repercussions that solely contributed positively towards the electoral fate of the Bharatiya Janata Party. The projection of Narendra Modi, the sculpted icon of development, aroused hope among the people of the country that they can now taste development. Assurance of rural growth and generation of rural jobs, pro-active, pro-people good governance along with emphasis upon inclusive and sustainable development worked wonder for the party<sup>5</sup>. In Modi people saw hope and credibility because he has been voted thrice back to power by the people of Gujarat<sup>6</sup>.

### **3. The Reasons why BJP emerged as the 'new' Majority Party: Popularity and Positivity**

Highly strategized and calculated campaign by BJP reaped benefits for the party. Emphasizing on core issues like development, good governance and covertly gliding with its core ideology of Hindutva politics or politics based on religion to consolidate its base when required then quickly shifting its campaigning strategy towards caste-based politics by wooing Dalits, OBCs to form new and enhanced support bases produced wonder for the party. Social and geographical barriers have been overcome with BJP's highly intelligently strategized electoral campaign, claims party president Rajnath Singh. Hence it has touched all the basic issues of concern as politics in India revolves around issues like religion, caste, development and aspiration for good governance. The repeated insistence of good days lying ahead (*acche din aane wale hain*) if Modi is voted to power was also able to catch the fancies of the development starving nation. It used every possible medium to spread the aura of Modi and resorted to emphatic and effective slogans like '*aab ki baar Modi Sarkar*' (this time it should be Modi-led government), '*Sabka saath, sabka vikas*' (collective efforts inclusive growth) to highlight its willing to adhere to an all inclusive policy and eschew its majoritarian policy. Its majoritarian and fundamentalist attitude was its biggest loophole that has prevented the Bharatiya Janata Party to have greater mass appeal in this secular country. The minorities and the disadvantageous section of the society have since the Bombay and Gujarat riots have perceived BJP with skepticism, fear and disdain.

Moreover, placing Amit Shah in charge of election campaign in Uttar Pradesh played dividends for the party. Shah is credited to have crafted a very well planned election campaign in the state of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) by meticulously preparing a consortium of diligent cadres, striking every chord correctly with regard to caste calculations as well as simultaneously pursuing its traditional *hindutva* politics by wooing its core support base of the upper caste

Hindus. BJP retained its hard line Hindu credentials. During the 1980s the communal agenda of BJP centered on issues like Babri mosque, construction of Ram temple and the city of Ayodhya. Earlier it mobilized Hindu voters through anti-cow slaughter movement during the 1966-67 and insisted and protested in front of the Parliament to pass law for prohibiting it. In the 2014 electoral campaign, apart from issues like development, eradication of corruption, good governance, mobilization in the name of 'identity' was also pursued as BJP had opted the city of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, the most religiously significant Hindu city on the bank of sacred river Ganges, as its citadel and subtly remained associated with its pro-Hindutva strategy to attract its vote from its traditional bases such as upper-caste, urban Hindus, small and middle businessmen and Hindu traders, cultivators, etc. (Hansen & Jaffrelot, p.4, 1996). Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state that sends eighty Member of Parliament to Lok Sabha. Since the presence of the party was not much impressive in the north-east and down south therefore winning maximum number of seats from the most populous Hindi heartland state<sup>7</sup> was imperative for the party to capture power at the centre. Therefore, to rekindle the feeling of 'being Hindu' and to popularize Modi, its prime ministerial candidate for Lok Sabha election 2014, for bigger electoral gains in the state of Uttar Pradesh the BJP leadership very intelligently opted for the most sacred city of the Hindus, Varanasi, which is primarily an ancient Hindu holy site and prudently abandoning the much controversial site Ayodhya which has left unhealing bruises in the memory of the people of India. This step yielded the desired benefit for the party and eventually the BJP could garner as much as seventy three seats in the state following the 2014 general election. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google plus came to the rescue of the party that made its campaign more approachable and kept the party connected with millions of voters. The extensive use of the social media reaped benefits for the party significantly<sup>8</sup>.

BJP made significant inroads in Bihar, Maharashtra besides Uttar Pradesh and retained its outstanding performances in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan. Choosing Modi the prime ministerial candidate despite of opposition from the old vanguards paid dividends for the party as well. On the contrary, despite of every odd the party has tried to put up a united picture among the upper rung leaders in front of the nation to win their faith and confidence<sup>9</sup>. The party refurbished its line of leadership by discreetly sidelining the leaders like Murli Manohar Joshi, L.K.Advani, Sushma Swaraj, Arun Shourie, Jaswant Singh, Yaswant Sinha and displacing them with a new team of leaders like Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Narendra Modi, Nitin Gadkari etc.

Modi's electrifying campaign across the nation created a wave of support for the party. Modi enthused energy in the electoral campaign and emerged as the star campaigner of the 2014 general election. The positive image of the prime ministerial candidate worked in favour of the party in whom

people saw the leader of the nation who can steer them out of poverty, unemployment and some such other problems. He in order to effectively identify and connect himself with the common *masses* and create a greater appeal referred to his humble origin of a poor, simple ‘*chaiwala*’ (tea vendor) in his early life who has now dared to challenge the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty<sup>10</sup>.

#### **4. The Reasons for Congress-led UPA Debacle: Performance**

The Congress party could not raise hope and sell vision for a better tomorrow among the masses. It appeared as though they were overburdened with their own under performance, inefficiency and stains of corruption. They failed to assess people’s mood which yearned for development, performance, enhanced services, good life, strong, decisive leadership and a stable and an ‘able’ government. They on the contrary Congress during its election campaign got engaged in dirty blame game and had no such significant achievements to bolster up on<sup>11</sup>. Rahul Gandhi lacked the enigma and energy and could not emerge as ‘one’ among the many<sup>12</sup>. Their last minute alliance with Lalu Prasad’s RJD was seen with skepticism by the common masses as he himself was behind the bars for his alleged involvement in the fodder scam. With time it was seen the credibility of the Congress-led UPA government faded away. Large investment in social sector, a surge in the investment in infrastructure building, rapid increase in rural consumption pattern, increasing per capita income for three times during the last decade, making attempts to bring transparency through Right To Information Act (RTI), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MNREGA) programme, food security bill, pension reform bill, land acquisition bill, direct transfer schemes and some such other legislations were some of the achievements of the Congress-led UPA government over the last ten years. Yet efforts like MNREGA were found to be riddled with ineptitude and corruption. The land acquisition bill<sup>13</sup> that took long span of time to come up was said to be full of flaws and not well enacted as some section of the industry felt that the process of land acquisition from the farmers was long and cumbersome and involved exorbitant compensations<sup>14</sup>. Its hasty initiatives for foreign direct investment in retail and insurance sector, cutting government expenditure by introducing direct cash transfer scheme (which will indirectly reduce the burden of subsidy) invited criticism for UPA II government.

When the series of corruption scandal jolted the credibility of the pro-people image of the Congress-led UPA government they resorted to strategies like maintaining silence, giving assurances, strong denial of any wrongdoing, sacrificing allies, sending tainted leaders behind the bar etc. They could have won back the confidence of the people of India by cancelling the tainted contracts, denying and protesting in public against the quick bail of the accused, discontinuing alliance with DMK completely rather than waiting until the latter itself deserted it on the issue of the protection of the Tamils in Sri Lanka,

refraining from shielding corrupt ministers which could have strengthened the stature of the office of the Prime Minister who is the leader of the nation. Rather than resisting against the corruption crusade (India against Corruption campaign under the stewardship of Anna Hazare) the Congress party should have associated itself actively through its prominent cadres to testify the fact in front of the nation that it too abhors the evil practice of corruption and could have saved the party from the worst ever downslide to a great extent. To make the matter worse for the Congress-led government the Nirbhaya rape case in Delhi (which then had Congress-led state government), the Shakti Mill Mumbai gangrape case (where too Congress-NCP duo ran the state government) corroded the validity of the government. These series of crises ultimately made difficult for the Congress party to win back the faith of the general populace of the nation. The only way the population of a democratic country can show their wrath is through the electoral verdict. The Congress-led UPA government has been severely admonished for its incompetence, inefficiency, non-performance and apathy. Therefore, INC could secure a very dreary tally of seats and scored zero in some ten states such as Rajasthan, Tripura, Gujarat, Goa, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi and performed miserably in West Bengal by securing four seats. In Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh it could bag just two seats respectively. In Karnataka it could win just nine seats, in Kerala it fetched some eight seats and in Assam and Punjab it could garner just three seats. In Chattisgarh and Haryana it scored one seat respectively.

#### **5. 2014 Electoral Performance of BJP**

The good showing of BJP in the state of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan during the 2013 assembly polls was an early sign of the probability that BJP might leave its imprint in the national election, remained unheeded by the Congress Working Committee. The BJP performed outstandingly in the North and in the West that contributed extensively towards the victory of the party in the 2014 general election in the country. Rajasthan under the leadership of Vasundhara Raje captured all of the twenty five Lok Sabha seats. In Gujarat, BJP had a clean sweep over all the twenty-six Lok Sabha seats. Madhya Pradesh under the leadership of Shivraj Singh Chauhan fetched twenty-seven of the twenty nine Lok Sabha seats and Chattishgarh too voted in favour of the right wing party by bestowing it with ten out of the eleven Lok Sabha seats.

BJP made inroads in the North-East by occupying one seat in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam as well by bagging seven seats thereby surpassing INC and All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF). Although in the last assembly election BJP was drubbed by INC in Karnataka but the trend got reversed when it surpassed all the other parties by occupying 17 of the 28 Lok Sabha seats and this contributed considerably towards the overall tally of seats for the party. Uttarakhand contributed all its five Lok Sabha seats in the

share of BJP's total tally of seats. In Bihar too BJP had put up an outstanding performance by fetching for itself twenty two of the forty Lok Sabha seats by surpassing INC, Janata Dal-United (JD-U) and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). The votes of the Yadavs, OBC and Dalits as well has drifted towards BJP due to 'NaMo' effect that claims to provide development and upliftment to all irrespective of caste, community, creed, religion through his motto '*sabka saath, sabka vikas*' (collective effort inclusive development). Delhi after its disappointment with INC and Aam Admi Party (AAP) finally has now resorted to BJP by conferring it with all the seven Lok Sabha seats. In Uttar Pradesh, BJP gave its hallmark performance by bagging seventy one seats out of the eighty Lok Sabha seats and this led to rise in the share of the seat for the party that contributed significantly towards its success. The magnificent electoral campaign designed by Amit Shah, general secretary of BJP, paid manifold. Appealing to vote for the party from the Jats to take revenge from the Muslims for the Muzaffarnagar riot in U.P led to consolidation of OBC vote behind the party that triggered its total number of seats<sup>15</sup>. Varanasi resonated with slogans like '*Har Har Modi*' whereby efforts were made to equate Modi with Lord Shiva, the Hindu mythological god, so as to consolidate the votes of the Hindus and the Brahmins for the party. BJP made its presence felt in West Bengal and Punjab as well by winning two seats respectively. In Maharashtra, it routed out Congress-NCP duo by winning twenty three seats along with eighteen seats grabbed by Shiv Sena, its long time ally in the state. In Odisha, despite of any strong presence in the state, BJP could manage to win one seat. Himachal Pradesh bestowed its entire four seats in the favour of the BJP. The 'NaMo wave' also swept Haryana where it had secured seven seats in comparison to one seat of INC. Even in Jammu and Kashmir, BJP could leave its imprint and could bag three seats whereas Nationalist Conference drew a blank.

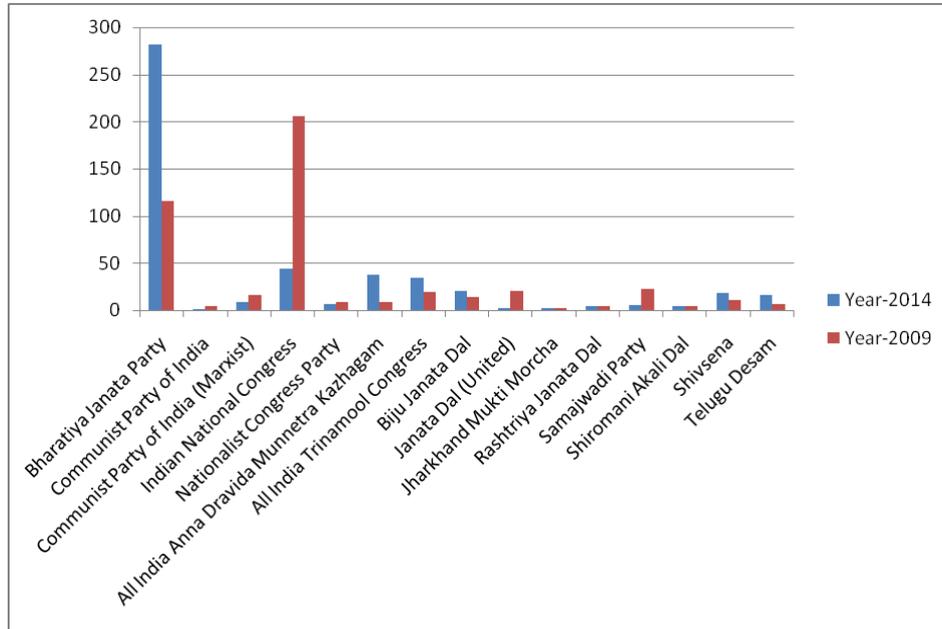
#### **6. The Translation of aspirations into Party System: Populism**

When all the states have thrown aside regional considerations and voted in favour of Brand Modi and his much hyped and celebrated 'Gujarat model', four states remained an aberration namely, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha and Tripura. This election yielded results for those who performed and was prepared for delivering governance and development. Jayalalitha was paid off for her pro-people and development oriented policies such as providing drought relief to the farmers, rice at Rs. 2 per kg, distributing mixer and grinder and electric fan free of cost, ensuring free education along with laptop, books, bicycles, school bags to the students free of cost, etc. All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) gave a laudable performance in the state of Tamil Nadu and bagged thirty seven Lok Sabha seats polling 3.3 percent of votes eliminating its prime opponent Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) which drew a blank probably for its linkages with the 2G spectrum scam. Similarly, Naveen Patnaik of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Orissa too kept his

record by bagging twenty of the twenty one Lok Sabha seats polling 1.7 percent of votes. Patnaik is credited with efficiency and administrative efficacy and these has been considered as some of the prime reason for his spectacular performance. His populist measures like subsidized rice for Rs. 1 per kg, old age pension and social security schemes, distribution of free umbrella, laptop, clothing and school uniforms to the destitute, providing houses to homeless families not included in Below Poverty Line (BPL) list and bicycles to girl students paid profusely for the party. West Bengal routed out INC and Left and maintained its adherence to Trinamool Congress. Despite of some serious challenges confronting the pro-people image of the party such as Sharada chit fund scam that involved some of its own MLAs, the haunting Park Street rape case and the subsequent forced transfer issue of Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Damini Sen, the Kamduni rape case where the family members of the victim alleged involvement of some Trinamool leaders in the incident of rape the party was still able to withhold its performance and in fact improved its number of seats from nineteen to thirty four of the forty two Lok Sabha seats polling 3.8 percent of votes. Mamata Banerjee kept her voters allured with her simplicity and catchy phrases, resorted to popular strategies such as providing financial assistance to the youth through schemes like *yuvashree* and aided girl child through schemes like *kanyashree* which assured Rs.500 per year for schooling and transferred Rs. 25000 to the family bank account when a girl turns 18, besides removing entry taxes on goods. Although Left has performed abysmally poor in the state of West Bengal but could retain its performance only in Tripura where the Communist Party of India–Marxist (CPI-M) won both the seats in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls. The popularity of Manik Sarkar, the Chief Minister of Tripura, and his political acumen are some of the most significant factors that have enabled CPI (M) to retain its last bastion. Apart from this, attaining self-sufficiency in food, generating employment through several projects, ability to restore and maintain peace and harmony among the tribal indigenous population and the Bengali settlers, providing access to safe drinking water and provision of 35 kg of rice at Rs. 2 per kg for BPL families are some of the factors that contributed towards its consolidation in the state and its performance in the Lok Sabha polls. Left as of now has slipped into oblivion. It stands almost eradicated In West Bengal. When it parted ways with UPA- I in 2009 over the nuclear deal in the name of ideology the general populace was unable to grasp their intellectual projections. The Left leadership stands in disarray and failed to adapt itself to the changing social and political dynamics, lacks the organisational strength which was earlier its hallmark. It lacks its presence among the backward classes. The leadership needs to be revamped, enthused with energy, zeal to work and broader vision for a nation. Moreover, it always lacked an impressive national appeal. It was mostly restricted to Kerala, West Bengal where it ruled for more than three decade and in Tripura where it still maintains its foothold. Kerala still shuffles between Left Democratic Front (LDF) and Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF).

The smaller parties that had played bigger roles have now with the 2014 general election been cut to size. Parties like Samajwadi Party (SP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Janata Dal (United) who have earlier played burgeoning influence in Indian politics since the late 1980s have suffered a nose dive with the 2014 Lok Sabha polls. BSP, a significant regional player representing the Dalits drew a blank whereas SP that is now in possession of the state mantle in Uttar Pradesh could bag just five seats polling 3.4 percent of votes. SP was accused of minority appeasement by its own traditional voters and this led to the swinging away of the Yadav, Jats and OBC votes from the party. BJP by resorting to caste-based mobilization during the electoral campaign, despite being traditionally an anti-Dalit and anti-Muslim party, have cut into the share of votes of the parties representing these sections of the society. Communal polarization following the Muzaffarnagar riots in Western Uttar Pradesh between the Jats (who recently have been conferred with the category of OBC) and the Muslims went against the electoral fortune of Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) of Ajit Singh and Bahujan Samaj Party as well. The rise of BJP proved detrimental for popular regional players like RJD and Janata Dal (United) as well. Their seat tally has reduced drastically to four and two respectively. However, regional parties like Telegu Desam Party (TDP), Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) of Ramvilas Paswan, Akali Dal in Punjab and Shiv Sena (SS) gained immensely in the 2014 Lok Sabha election by forging their opportunistic alliance with BJP. New entrant Telangana Rashtriya Samiti (TRS), a state based party, headed by Kalvakuntla Chandrashekhara Rao (KCR) too swept the Lok Sabha and assembly election with thumping number of seats. TRS bagged eleven of the seventeen Lok Sabha seats polling 1.2 percent of votes and out passed Congress, YSR Congress, TDP-BJP combine in the state assembly election by capturing sixty three seats in the 119 member Telangana assembly. The victory for TRS was obvious as its leader was the architect of the 29<sup>th</sup> state that took birth after a relentless struggle for statehood. His arduous campaign and motivating speeches enchanted voters in its favour. Moreover, the victory was the reward for his struggle. This election has pruned most of the regional parties but the time to write an obituary has not yet come. It would be premature to conclude that regional satraps have lost their essence and relevance in the Indian politics, more particularly at the central level or that 'issue' based politics have replaced or sidelined identity-based politics in such a heterogeneous society.

**Comparative performance of Political Parties during Lok Sabha election 2009 and 2014**



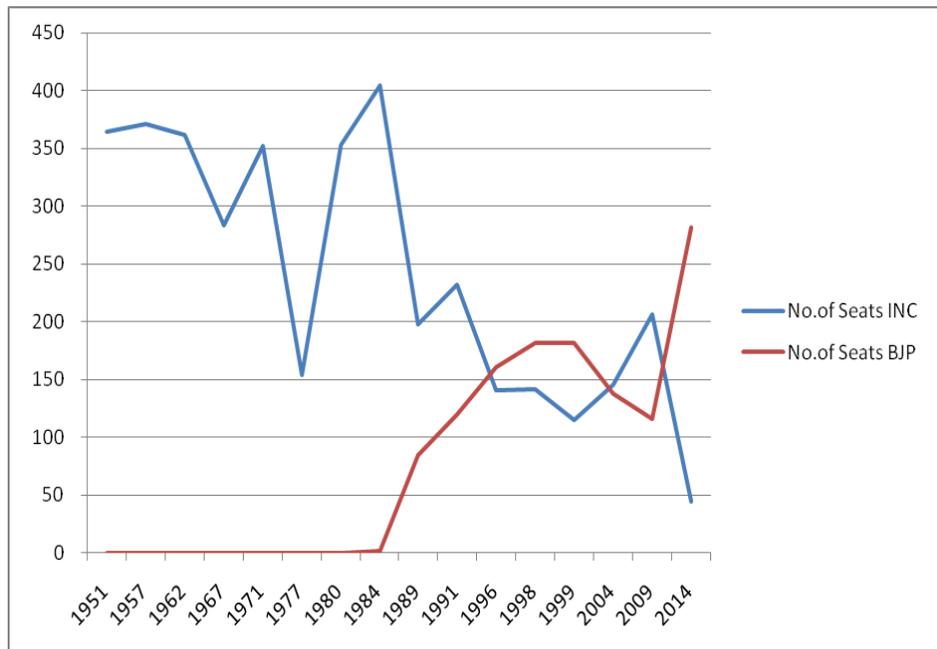
Source: Figures available from Election Commission of India website [http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/statistical\\_report.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/statistical_report.aspx) and <http://ecireresults.nic.in/>

Another new entrant the Aam Admi Party (AAP) too gave a dismal performance in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls. Following these cases of corruption, India witnessed a crusade against corruption under the banner of ‘India Against Corruption’ movement (which has been compared with the Jaya Prakash movement of 1974) for a Jan Lokpal Bill to cleanse the system of improper practices. Eventually the party emanating from the corruption crusade namely the Aam Admi Party (AAP) under the stewardship of Arvind Kejriwal, a civil society activist, was expected to play a decisive role in the 2014 election. But its 49 days tenure as a state ruler which failed to deliver as promised led to erosion of its charisma that it had spelt over the people of India with its crusade faded away. People failed to repose their faith in it as it clearly displayed its administrative ignorance and ineptitude while in power heading the Delhi state government. Kejriwal played an opportunistic role by forming a party thereby giving manifestation to his own political aspirations under the veil of corruption crusader. AAP is a political novice with no significant experience of running a government and this acted as a deterrent towards its electoral performance. Although it had contested 443 seats from all over the country but could win just four seats in Punjab only.

### 7. 2014 Lok Sabha Election and the Realigned Indian Party System

With the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election the Indian party system has also witnessed sea changes. The Indian party system as it exhibits is multiparty in nature since its origin, although it keeps reconfiguring structurally with every election. The Indian party system from a competitive multi-party system with Congress predominance as the majority party till 1967 that remained fragmented as well as binodal since 1967 has once again transformed into a competitive multi-party system with Bharatiya Janata Party's predominance as the 'majority party'<sup>16</sup> as it has secured only 20.58 percent of votes and 31.34 percent of seats.

#### Comparative Performance of INC and BJP since 1951-2014



Source: Figures available from Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation website [http://mospi.nic.in/Mospi\\_New/upload/SYB2014/ch43.html](http://mospi.nic.in/Mospi_New/upload/SYB2014/ch43.html)

The trend of bipolarization, fragmentation and coalition politics has suffered a setback although these trends have not evaporated completely. The party system still remains bipolarized with BJP at one end and Congress and other parties at the other pole trying to revamp them. The Indian party system has always remained in a state of flux therefore the equation might get reversed at any course of time. The Indian party system still presents a messy picture as in many states such as Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha, Sikkim, voted for their respective state-based parties and Tripura voted for CPI(M) thereby

keeping the party system fragmented in nature. States like Telangana, Seemandhra, Odisha, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Puduchery, Bihar, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh that went to assembly polls subsequently, voted for non-BJP parties such as TRS, TDP, BJD, SDF, AIADMK, Congress-DMK alliance, JD(U)-RJD alliance and Trinamool Congress respectively retaining the fragmented nature of the party system. Arunachal Pradesh too voted for a non-BJP alternative. Congress had a clean sweep in the state by securing thirty nine seats of the sixty assembly berths. BJP won just five seats and People's Party of Arunachal secured a lone seat. Similarly, in Odisha BJD stormed back to power by capturing 117 seats in the 147 member assembly. In the Seemandhra assembly election TDP- BJP combine secured 106 seats out of the 175 assembly seats. In Sikkim, Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) emerged victorious by winning 22 seats of the 32 assembly seats. The Indian Party System still stands bifurcated into the national and state level. Some stability, coherence and uniformity has been restored at the central level only as the mandate went in favour of a party that had crossed the half-way mark all by itself which breaks the spell of coalition government. BJP came back to power at the centre after more than a decade. It is the first party since 1984 to get a majority on its own at the union level as since 1989 coalition form of government had become the order of the day. Since 1989 not a single political party was able to secure absolute majority on its own at the union level. Three national elections between the period 1996 till 1999 and five votes of 'no confidence' indicated a high level of political instability of the Indian party system. Moreover, it is credited to be the first non-Congress party to have won an absolute majority on its own. The verdict restored some essence to the lost relevance of the form of Parliamentary Democracy and also strengthened the office of the Prime Minister as the overwhelming role of the small parties was reduced as the ruling party had absolute majority on its own.

## **8. Conclusion**

The Indian Party system has acquired coherence after a long span of almost more than two decades. The Opposition party (BJP) has elevated itself to the position of the ruling party by bagging an absolute majority of seats. An informal coalition structure of government exists at the central level although the leading party has crossed the half way mark on its own. This development ensures a higher degree of stability in the way of ensuring governance to the masses with the absence of disruptions, continuous bargaining, negotiations and messy compromises with the coalition partners. 2014 general election is significant because the intensely disparate coalition era has come to a halt although the Indian party system still stands bifurcated into two levels due to the fragmented pattern of voting behaviour of the electorates. However, BJP can withhold its status of a majority party in the Indian party system only if it is able to deliver, perform and resort to dedicated and sincere implementation of

its programmes and policies. The Modi-led Government has to now create policies that would respond to people expectations and translate promises into actions. The BJP-led Central Government should work ardently and with great determination to resolve some of the grave problems like – corruption in the administration, financial lay off, fiscal deficits, unemployment, poverty, accelerating agricultural growth, expanding primary education, reducing gap between the rich and the poor, minimize threats to climate change, take efforts to control pollution, environmental hazards, terrorism and insurgencies, the Naxalite challenge and others threats to internal and external security, etc. to cement its credibility.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Party system will reflect principal cleavages and conflicts in the society. According to Lipset and Rokkan, cleavages manifest in several forms along the socio-economic, religious, ethnicity and urban-rural parameters. See Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *"Cleavages, Structure, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: An Introduction"* in *"Party system and Voter Alignments: Cross National Perspectives"*, Free Press, New York, 1967.
- <sup>2</sup> *"Only NDA can bring about change in India: Narendra Modi"*, www.ndtv.com, May 11, 2014 (accessed on May 20, 2014 at 10:45 am).
- <sup>3</sup> For understanding of 'Gujarat Model' See <http://www.narendramodi.in/>
- <sup>4</sup> *"Leadership factor in 2014 polls"*, The Hindu, May 28, 2014.
- <sup>5</sup> BJP Election Manifesto (2014) :[http://www.bjp.org/images/pdf\\_2014/full\\_manifesto\\_english\\_07.04.2014.pdf](http://www.bjp.org/images/pdf_2014/full_manifesto_english_07.04.2014.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> *"India has won! Good days ahead: Modi"*, The Hindu, May 16, 2014.
- <sup>7</sup> Census 2001 data on Population by Religious communities. Out of 166197921 people from all religious communities in U.P 133979263 Hindus resided in Uttar Pradesh in comparison to 30740158 Muslims. (NSSO National Data Bank For Socio-Religious Categories).
- <sup>8</sup> *"How BJP's Online Campaign Proved Vital For Success"*, www.ndtv.com, May 20, 2014 (accessed on May 22, 2014 at 02:10 pm).
- <sup>9</sup> The futile future of the Bharatiya Janata Party therefore depends in its ability to perform as well as maintain cohesion and cordiality among its cadres. The party's linkages with the militant organisation like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) is still seen with apprehension. On various occasions these organisations have regulated the functioning of the BJP. RSS is a militant Hindu nationalist organisation and VHP, a Hindu revivalist organisation that favours adopting a militant Hindu stand on political and social issues (Malik and Singh, 1994). The RSS under the stewardship of Mohan Bhagat have negotiated

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to bring unanimity among the rank and file of the BJP leadership to endorse Modi's candidature for prime ministership for the 2014 Lok Sabha election. There was considerable opposition from the top leadership of BJP over the possible choice of Modi as the prime ministerial candidate. Sushma Swaraj and L.K Advani have firmly opposed to his candidature. RSS and VHP through their cadre is said to have extensively supported BJP in the ongoing general election campaign and rallies.

<sup>10</sup> "Modi-chaiwala to dream merchant", The Hindu, May 17, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Sonal Bhadoria, "Toffee Model: Rahul Mocks Modi's Gujarat Model", www.indiatimes.com, April 14, 2014 (accessed on May 20, 2014 at 12:05 pm). Also See "Rahul Gandhi Attacks Narendra Modi in Varanasi", www.ndtv.com, May 10, 2014 (accessed on May 20, 2014 at 12:30 pm)

<sup>12</sup> "Congress Concedes Weak Campaign, Failed Media Strategy", www.ndtv.com, May 16, 2014 (accessed on May 23, 2014 at 11:15 am).

<sup>13</sup> The Bill will empower the rights of the farmer as according to the Bill it gives farmers' upto four times more of the market rate for land acquired for the industry and infrastructure.

<sup>14</sup> "Lok Sabha Passes Land Acquisition Bill", www.profit.ndtv.com, August 29, 2013. Also See "House Panel Decision on Land Bill to hit industry: Adi Godrej", www.profit.ndtv.com, May 17, 2012 (accessed on May 22, 2014 at 10:45 am).

<sup>15</sup> Communal passions were flared by some BJP leaders for their own electoral gains during the mahapanchayat that was held after the culmination of the Muzaffarnagar riots during September, 2013 to resolve the conflict between the Jats and the Muslims.

<sup>16</sup> A "majority party" is one which by itself possesses more than half of the parliamentary seats. However, a dominant party is one that holds the majority over a long period of political development. See Maurice Duverger, "Political Parties: Their organisation and Activity In Modern states", 1955, pp.307-309.

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