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Haryana assembly election 2014: Saffron tsunami sweeps the state

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Abstract

In a historic shift in power in Haryana, the Bharatiya Janata Party, for the first time has emerged as the largest single party with absolute majority, paving the way for the formation of a stable and “Centre-supported” government. The BJP, which only had four MLAs in 2009 assembly election in Haryana, easily crossed the halfway mark of 45 in the 90-member Assembly by winning 47 seats. The incumbent Congress government led by Bhupinder Singh Hooda failed miserably despite ruling the state for 10 years. It could manage a distant third with only 15 seats. The Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), the main opposition political party in Haryana, managed to back only 19 seats, a significant drop from the 31 seats it had won back in 2009, establishing itself as a weak runner up for the second consecutive time. The HJC (Haryana Jan hit Congress-BL) and BSP have been reduced to fringe players in the state politics. The results indicate that the era of piggy back riding its way to power are over for the BJP. The BJP will no longer play second fiddle to the regional parties in the future.

Keywords: Haryana, Assembly Election, Saffron tsunami

Introduction

The rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party is the political story of the year. The recent state election in Haryana has just confirmed it. The BJP has been able to repeat its Lok Sabha performance of May 2014, even consolidating some of its positions in a context of intense competition between solidly entrenched national and regional parties. The BJP's rise in Haryana is particularly spectacular. From the position of distant fourth in 2009, with four seats for 9.04 percent of vote share, the BJP succeeded in securing the majority of seats (52 percent) with its highest-ever tally of votes (33.2 percent).

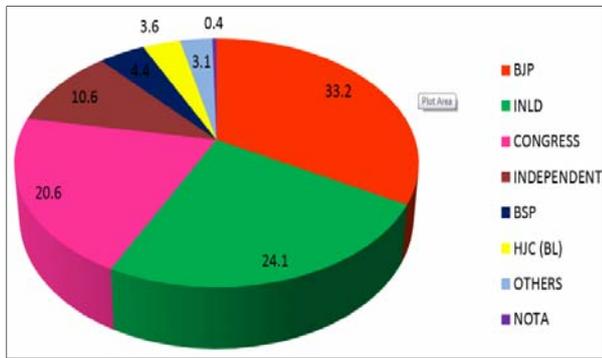
Table 1: Performance of Political Parties

Party	Seat Won in 2009	Seat Won in 2014	Difference	Vote share in 2009	Vote share in 2014	Difference
BJP	4	47	+ 43	9	33.2	+ 24.2
INC	41	15	-26	35.1	20.6	-14.5
INLD	30	19	-11	25.8	24.1	-1.7
HJC	6	2	-4	7.4	3.6	-3.8
INDEP	7	5	-2	15	12.9	-2.1
OTHERS	2	2	0	7.7	5.6	-2.1

Source: Election Office, New Delhi.

The BJP won 47 seats out of total 90 seats. The result has created history, as it will be for the first time that the BJP will form the government on its own in the state. The incumbent Congress lost heavily, both in terms of seats and votes – it saw a negative vote swing of more than 10 percentage points and its tally of seats fell by 25. The party dropped to the third position, leaving the opposition space to the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) (Table.1).

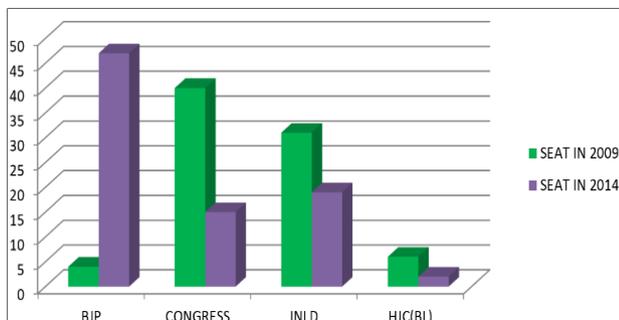
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Source: Election Office, New Delhi.

Fig 1: Vote share of political parties in 2014 assembly election.

Despite only a marginal drop in vote share of 1.7 percentage points, the INLD’s position in the state’s politics is shaky. The INLD won 19 seats and secured the second place. Other parties such as Kuldeep Bishnoi’s Haryana Jan hit Congress (HJC) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) have been reduced to marginal players with a vote share of less than five percent.



Source: Election Office, New Delhi.

Fig 2: No. of seats won by main political parties in 2009 & 2014 assembly election.

The HJC-Haryana Jan Chetna Party (HJCP) alliance secured 4.2percent of the votes and managed to win only two seats – Adampur and Hansi – which were contested by Bishnoi and his wife Renuka Bishnoi respectively. The independent candidates tally also dropped in this election and only five independent candidates found their place in state legislative assembly (Fig.1).

Objective

- The present study has following objectives
- To analyze the BJP’s social Engineering of wooing the voters.
- To analyze the reasons behind Congress and INLD failure.
- To find out the factors that helped BJP crossing the magic 45+

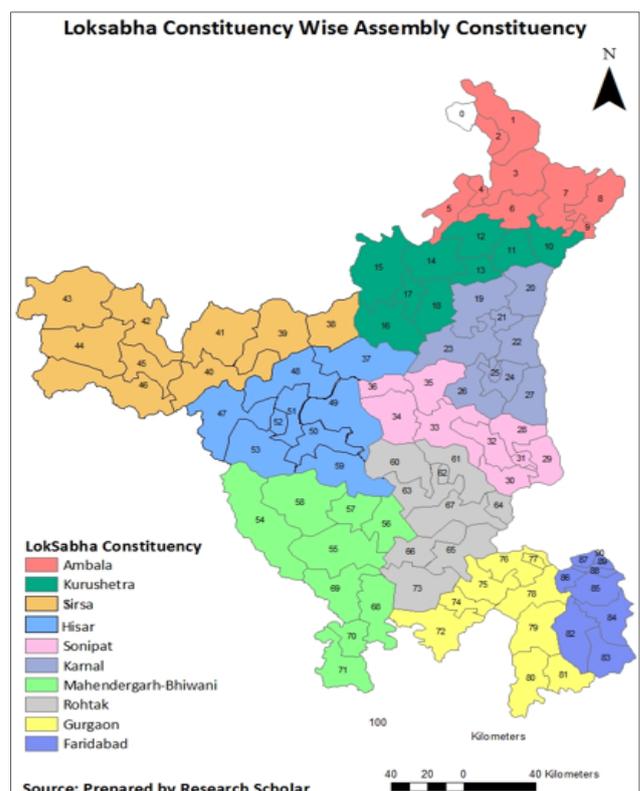
Study Area

The 2014 Haryana Assembly election has been taken as the study unit. The election was held on 15 October 2014 to elect 90 members of the Haryana Legislative Assembly. The results were announced on 19 October. Four major parties contested the election - the Indian National Congress (INC, incumbent), the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Haryana Janhit Congress (HJC). Others that contested the elections included candidates from the Bahujan Samaj Party, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Samajwadi Party, Shiromani Akali Dal (an alliance partner of

BJP in neighbouring Punjab), other regional parties and independents. Voter turnout for the Assembly election set a new state record with 76.54 percent. A total of 1,351 candidates, of which 116 were women, contested for the 90 seats (an average of 15 candidates per seat). This was the highest number of total and women candidates in Haryana assembly elections since its formation in 1966. Though, this inflation of the number of candidates did not impact very much on the outcome as most of them failed to get any votes. Further, out of total 1351 candidates contested, 83 percent forfeited their deposit, which mean that they gathered each less than one-sixth of the total votes polled in their constituency.

Data Base and Methodology

Data required for the purpose of understanding the whole range of basic facts, opinions and attitudes relevant to our study have been collected from various sources and through diverse methods. More emphasis has been placed on published materials and written documents while discussion with political leaders and people belonging to different walk of life have been conducted in a limited scale in order to present the course of events in its proper perspective. The secondary data have been collected from Election Office India, New Delhi, Election office Haryana, Reports of TV channels, Newspaper articles reports, and NGO reports, Census of India 2001 and 2011. Mapping and graphical presentation works have been made with the help of GIS techniques and Ms-Excel.

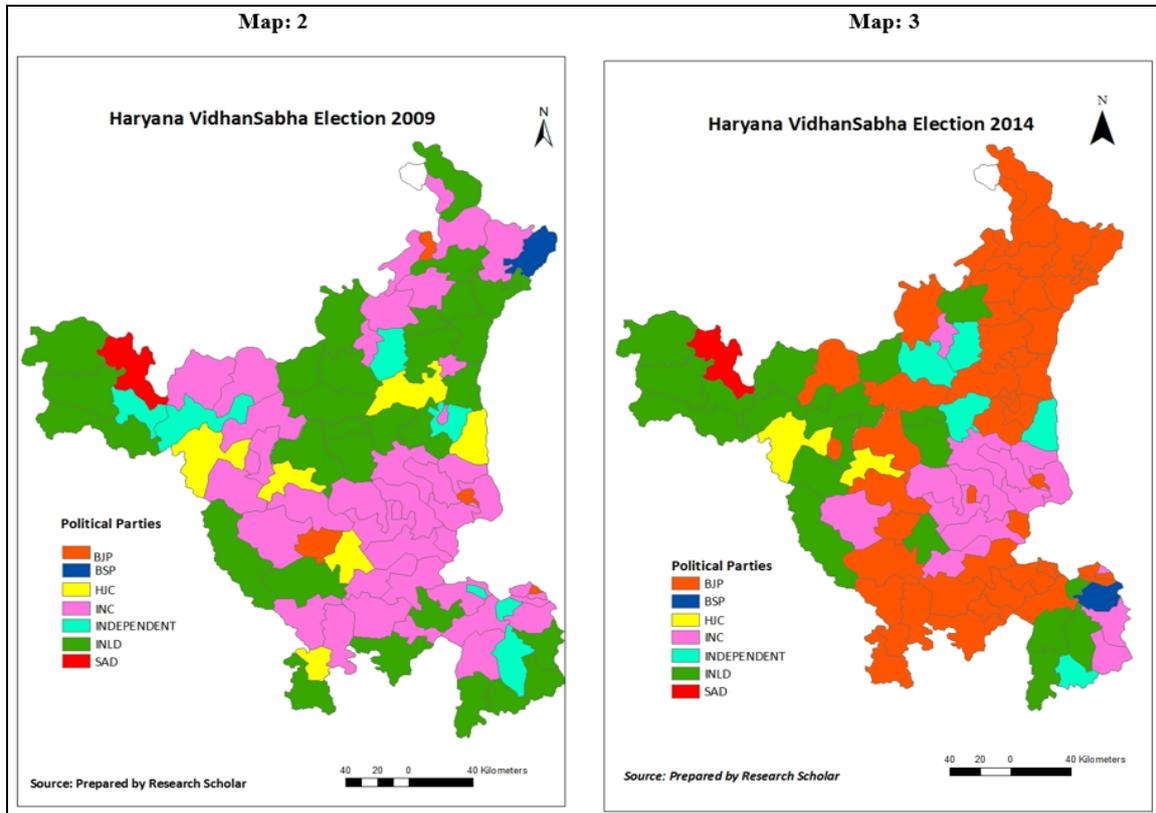


Source: Prepared by Research Scholar

Map 1: Study Area

BJP Performance

The BJP scripted a historic win in the Haryana Vidhan Sabha elections, notching up 47 seats to get a clear majority in the 90-member House. The party that has never got more than 10 per cent of the votes and played second fiddle to regional partners in the past, swept aside competition from the Congress and the Indian National Lok Dal to mop up 33.2 per cent of the votes (Table.1)

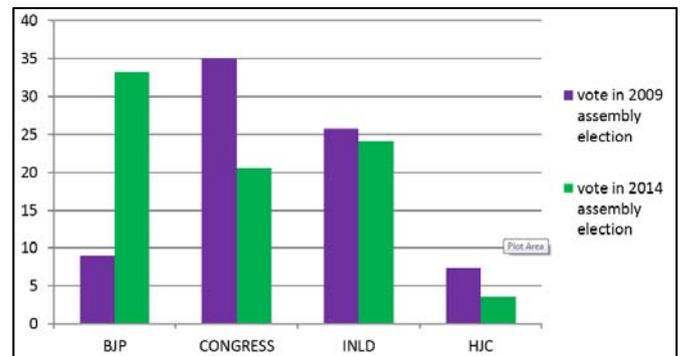


With an absolute majority in Haryana, the BJP does not need to be at the mercy of a fragile alliance with another political party (Map.2). Bear in mind the fact that in the 2009 Legislative Elections in Haryana, the BJP had managed to garner only 4 seats- the present increase is a near 1100 percent (47 seats), a figure that is both staggering and mindboggling (Fig.2). From that result, it may seem that BJP has carried on its Lok Sabha run and continues to shine. The amplitude of victory margins reinforces the decisive character of the BJP’s victory. The BJP won 28 out of its 47 seats with a winning margin greater than 10 percent, a remarkable feat considering the four- and sometimes five-corner character of the competition. The BJP’s gain has been at the expense of both INLD and Congress, the latter bearing the brunt with 22 seats being lost to the BJP. The Congress could retain only 12 out of the 40 seats that it had won in 2009, with two and one seats gained from the INLD and the BJP. The INLD lost heavily to the BJP (17 seats) but somewhat compensated with a five seat addition from the Congress (Table.1).

Congress Performance

The Indian National Congress seems to have its legs knocked from under it. The Congress failed miserably despite ruling the state for 10 years, and it’s decimation in Haryana looks complete both in terms of seat and vote share (Map.3). It has even been overshadowed by the INLD, a reputedly spent force in the state. The INC garnered only 15 seats, a straight 25 seat (or a 167 percent) decline (Table.1). The Congress came second in only 19 constituencies compared to 40 second positions of the INLD. It is a far cry from its 2009 performance, where not only did the Congress win 40 seats; it also came second in 42 other constituencies (Map.3). The Congress at the third position has lost ground in many of its strongholds, the biggest one were Rohtak, and Rewari where Bharat Bhusan Batra (best MLA awarded) and Capt Ajay Yadav (five time consecutive winner) had to face the defeat respectively. Thus in 2014 election, the party which ruled the

state for 10 years, has been confined to three districts only i.e. Rohtak, Sonipat, and Jhajjar (Map 4&5).



Source: Election Office, New Delhi.

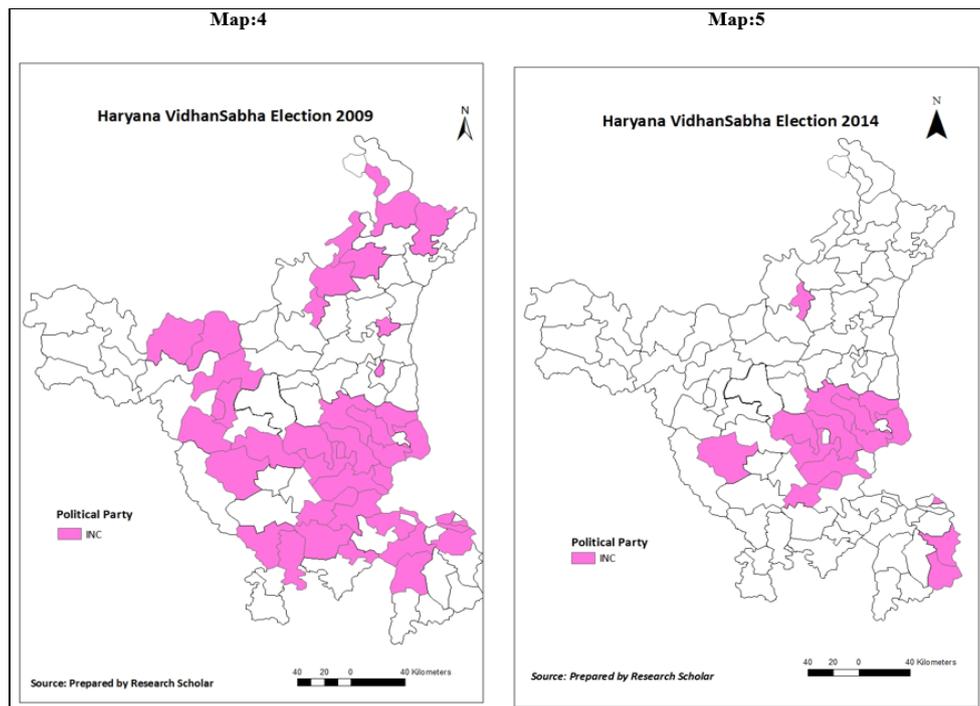
Fig 3: Vote Share of Main Political Parties in 2009 & 2014 Assembly Election

What went wrong with Congress?

The party banked on its local candidates' visibility and campaigns in their respective constituencies and kept its campaign centred on development. The Congress was hopeful of cashing in on the issue of development. Even the Congress trumpeted its government's development initiatives ahead of the polls, it doled out reservation for Jats, distributed sops to employees, granted Sikhs a separate Gurdwara committee, announced an increase in several social security schemes and a lot more but, still, ended up biting the dust in an election which saw Congress leaders “poached” by the BJP. The formation of the HSGMC couldn’t translate into votes for the Congress from the Sikh-dominant areas in the state. The poll results in the Sikh-dominated areas suggest that Sikh community did not bite the bait of the Congress on the Gurdwara issue. Of the 27 Sikh-dominated seats in the state, the BJP has bagged 17, while the INLD won nine and the Congress’ one (Map.2). Thus chief minister Bhupinder Singh

Hooda's development plank did not strike a chord with the electorate. The corruption charges against his government turned the tide against him coupled with anti-incumbency

factor and the "Modi wave" and the vote for change brought down the Congress from 40 seats in the last House to just 15 (Fig 2).



Weaknesses of Congress

It is believed that the reason for the party's defeat lies within since its leaders washed dirty linen in public. This damage could never be controlled and matters went from bad to worse, as party leaders levelled allegations of lopsided development and discrimination in government jobs. The Vadra-DLF land deal became the "biggest scam" for the party that failed to effectively counter the allegations. State Congress President Ashok Tanwar's public display of unhappiness over ticket distribution, too, impacted the party negatively. Another major reason for the Congress's loss was Hooda's inability to strengthen the party organisation in the state. Over the last few years, Hooda had faced criticism from leaders in his party at various party forums. Senior leaders such as Kumari Selja and Birender Singh called Hooda the "Chief Minister of Rohtak" (*Business Standard* 2014). Both Hooda and the central leadership failed to address these grievances, which led to the exit of former union minister and Gurgaon MP (Member of Parliament) Rao Inderjit Singh (Who demanded a probe into the land deal of DLF with Robert Vadra, Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law); former Rajya Sabha MP and Jat leader Chaudhary Birender Singh; four times MP Avtar Singh Bhadana; and former MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) Venod Sharma and Chaudhary Dharambir (MLA from Sohna) from the party. These leaders were influential in their strongholds and most of them joined the BJP, thus strengthening its state-level leadership. Though Sonia and Rahul campaigned in the state, their speeches lacked bite and they seemed to have completely given up on the elections. The Congress seemed to have no reply to Modi's sway over the crowds and this resulted in the party falling from grace, failing to get a "respectable" number and ending up at the third position. Thus incumbency hasn't worked out for the Congress in 2014 and now it will have to sketch out a fresh game plan if it wants to remain significant in the state political scenario.

INLD Performance

The Haryana assembly election failed to bring cheer to INLD which was hoping that party supremo Om Prakash Chautala's intensive campaigning while he was out on bail would translate into an over-whelming support for the green brigade which relied on the old man's charisma to see it through. The party, which ended up with 19 seats in the total tally, clearly lost out in terms of appeal, very evident in the fact that its two most prominent leaders, Hisar MP Dushyant Chautala, state unit chief Ashok Arora lost to BJP's Prem Lata and Subhash Subha, respectively (Table 1). Despite losing the opportunity to make a comeback in the state after ten years, the INLD kept its base intact in Sirsa, the home district of party supremo Om Prakash Chautala. Even support to the BJP by Sirsa-based Dera Sacha Sauda was unable to dent INLD's hold over the voters on Chautalas' home turf. The INLD also did well in Mewat, Here Nasim Ahmad and Zakir Hussain won from Firozpur Jhirka and Nuh seats respectively (Map 2). For the voters of the Muslim-dominated Mewat district in Haryana, former Haryana Chief Minister and leader of INLD Om Prakash Chautala is the icon. Even Chautala's jail term for alleged corruption hasn't dented his popularity among the people here (Field survey by research scholar). The INLD may have thought itself as the Jat face of the state and hoping to ride the "sympathy wave" over the conviction of its tallest leader, party chief Om Prakash Chautala, in the teachers' recruitment scam. However, this came a cropper and the INLD's calculations fell flat as the BJP romped home to victory with a clear majority, even dashing the INLD's hopes of extending support in case the saffron party needed the numbers. The INLD has held its cadres together for a decade, but with the BJP filling in, the INLD cadres are bound to scatter away. Now the INLD will sit in the opposition for the third consecutive term though it will continue to retain the post of the Leader of the Opposition for being the second largest party.

HJC Performance

Winning two seats, including his family bastion in Adampur and Hansi, the HJC has been reduced to a fringe player in the state politics. Now, only the Bishnoi couple would represent the party in the Assembly. Kuldeep Bishnoi has won from the Adampur seat, which would be represented by the family for the 14th time in a row, and his wife Renuka won from the Hansi seat in the district. Kuldeep Bishnoi elder brother Chander Mohan, who was trying to rehabilitate in politics overcoming his controversial past had to face the defeat from the Nalwa segment. This is the worst performance for the party which won six seats in the 2009 Assembly elections (Map2&3).

The HJC has polled a mere 3.6 per cent vote in the Assembly polls, which is a drastic drop in comparison to the 2009 Assembly elections when the party secured 7.41 votes and won six seats from different places in the state (Table1). It even failed to retain the traditional support base in the districts, including Karnal, Faridabad and Ahirwal, where his father and former Chief Minister Bhajan Lal had a considerable following (Map 2&3). It is believed that Bishnoi seems to have conceded his vote bank as well as the plank of the non-Jat politics to the BJP. His strategy to consolidate the non-Jat votes by effecting an alliance with the parties was virtually hijacked by the BJP. The HJC's drubbing in the Assembly poll across the state indicates that the party faces a threat to its political survival.

Factors that supported BJP

1. Reliance on Modi wave

The BJP, which was riding high on the Narendra Modi wave in the Lok Sabha elections, kept up its momentum in the Assembly elections too. BJP once again played its 'Modi wave' card in Haryana and its star campaigner in the state remained Prime Minister Modi, who campaigned in the interiors of Haryana tirelessly addressing several rallies. He addressed 11 rallies in the state, has clearly helped BJP romp home comfortably. In some of the constituencies where Modi addressed rallies, the BJP candidates have won by a huge margin like Karnal, where Manoharlal Khattar won by over 60,000 votes, Badkhal (Faridabad) where Seema Trikha won by over 35,000 votes, Gurgaon where Umesh Agarwal registered highest margin win in the entire state. The other parties claimed Modi wave as a mere bubble and said that the bubble had busted after the Lok Sabha elections. The revival or resurfacing was, however, witnessed when Modi, who is known to be a campaigner par excellence, addressed marathon rallies in the state. Time when voters in some areas were looking for options and a hung Assembly was being predicted, Modi gave voters the majority mantra. It worked and the wave swept away all heavy weight candidates of other parties in the state.

2. The Dera Support

The decision of the Dera Sacha Sauda religious sect to support the BJP is being considered one of the important factors that played a vital role in the BJP's spectacular performance in Haryana Assembly elections. Though the saffron party has not won a single seat in the district (Sirsa), where the dera's headquarters are based, it is believed that its support towards the end of the campaign tilted the scales in BJP's favour.

The Dera, which claims to have more than six million followers in the state, especially in many districts of north and west Haryana, could have helped the BJP attract those sitting

on the fence. BJP's leader Amit Shah capitalized an opportunity to display his fabled negotiation skills and could easily coerce the Dera Pramukh into publicly declaring support for the BJP. Dera's declaration of support for BJP came just 48 hours before polling. In a multi-cornered contest on every seat, an average 8000 to 10000 votes of Dera supporters played a decisive role in determining the results. Thus because of Dera support, the BJP candidates who were locked in tough contest, could win their seat with handsome margin (Krar 2014).

3. Corruption

Corruption played a crucial role in this election. The BJP played the corruption and dynasty politics card to wipe out the Congress from the state. Modi during his campaign made the corruption in the 10-year Congress rule of Bhupinder Singh Hooda his main plank followed by Robert Vadra-DLF land deals and dynasty politics. He repeatedly gave calls for a 'Congress-mukt Bharat', while referring to Vadra, son-in-law of congress president Sonia Gandhi. Rao Inderjeet Singh (then Congress MP from Gurgaon) openly demanded a probe into the land deal of Robert Vadra with DLF. These incidents worsened congress image as a corruption laden party and the people of Haryana were now seeing for an alternate that might govern them.

On the other hand the INLD, which was hoping to garner sympathy votes for OP Chautala going to jail in the teachers' recruitment scam, too could not stand in the completely changed political scenario. INLD supermo Om Parkash Chautala said in rallies that he would take oath of chief minister of Haryana from Tihar Jail. His statement couldn't garner votes because the people of Haryana wanted a government with clean image. PM Modi's clean image has worked quite well in garnering support for the BJP over OP Chautala and Hooda, both laden with corruption charges. The people of the state were not happy with the Hooda government uneven development and corruption; they gave their mandate against the discrimination and went with Modi's vision of development. "Modi wave" became an epitome of development and people have voted for it. The four-month rule at the Centre gave people the true meaning of development and governance and it changed their mind towards BJP. Eventually the results have silenced all, including the Congress, who during every campaign, have talked about that Modi wave was a myth. Modi arose as a mass leader and his stature made the people of Haryana gave the BJP a chance to come to power.

4 BJP's Meticulous Leadership Planning

In loksabha election, the BJP victory came despite the absence of any State leader of note and with a skeletal party structure. The BJP depended entirely on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charisma and it worked in loksabha election. But the assembly election has a completely different environment; here election is contested on local issues (caste, clan, job, development, regional disparities) instead of national issues. The BJP shows a lack of big charismatic names in the party at the state level, which is definitely a worry for them. The BJP needs to establish a strong state level leadership with faces from most of the communities in the state while tiptoeing around Haryana's infamous caste minefields. Here the credit for establishing a strong state level leadership goes to Amit Shah and prime minister Narendra Modi, who strategically laid the groundwork to get back to power and were able to rally all

loyal party cadres to come together with the single focus agenda of removing the INC from power and it succeeded. The BJP had started to lay the foundation to the path to power by identifying a suitable set of possible candidates. There were several challenges. First, was to identify a candidate that continued to represent the aspirations of the dominant Jat community. The second was to identify someone who was acceptable to the schedule castes and other backward classes which is a sizeable segment in the state. The third was to choose a candidate that was taint free and did not carry any past baggage of corruption. The fourth was someone who is a party loyalist and has the ability to bring varied faction together. In order to consolidate its support base the BJP utilised the big names weaned away from Congress & INLD. The BJP gave tickets to many rebel leaders of Congress and INLD. The rebel leaders helped the BJP establish a support base in a state where it had only a minimal presence just a few years ago (Bhatia, 2014).

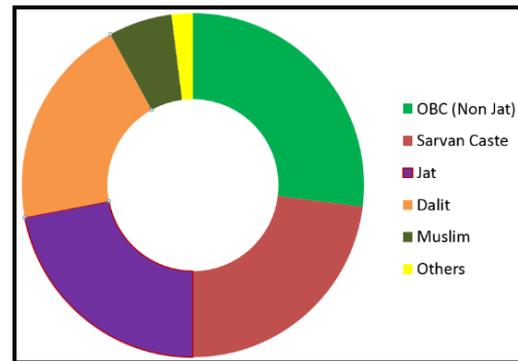
For Jats, the party roped in its national secretary Abhimanyu into the campaign and used clout of other top Jat leaders Choudhary Birendra Singh, Krishna Gehlawat, Surendra Singh Barwala, who had defected to the party either from Congress or INLD. Rao Inderjit Singh, also a former Congress leader, was made in-charge of Yadavs and Gujjars mostly inhabiting Gurgaon, Rewari and Mahendragarh. Also not only consolidating party's traditional Brahmin and Bania voters, Shah in the last minute roped in Sikh sect Dera Sacha Sauda, a traditional Congress supporter, as well to blunt the Akali edge, who were supporting the INLD.

With all the above parameters to be met, the BJP strategist Amit Shah took an early and deliberate decision not to project any candidates for the post of Chief Minister, hitherto, a strategy of Congress. The objective was to stave off any pre-poll factional fight within the party that would have weakened the party in a crucial fight that required the BJP to put up a united front. The strategy worked out very well as all factions within the party worked together with one purpose and that was to remove the Bhupinder Hooda's regime. Amit Shah and his team also had to take a major decision and that was whether to go into the elections alone or continue the fight with alliance partners. BJP contested the election without any alliance partner. Going alone into an election in a state where it had hardly any presence was indeed a gamble and it worked. Eventually the results have only demonstrated the Amit Shah and Narendra Modi combine's ability to make the right call, as the gamble has paid off handsomely.

5. BJP's Electoral Caste Micro-Management

The India social system is organised around caste structure, therefore, caste and politics can never be separated. Voting provides an opportunity to castes to assert their influence. Scholars like Rajni Kothari (1970), Lindzey Gardner, Miller (1950), Key (1955), Campbell (1960), and Norman Palmer (1976) have referred to caste as a voting determinant. Just as in Britain, voting is class-determinant, in United States, it is race-determinant, in India it is caste-determinant. Like India, caste plays a very important role in elections and voting in Haryana also. In Haryana, Jat with over 24.5 percent of the total electorate have emerged as the biggest force, while around 20 percent are from OBCs and SCs respectively. Jats, Rajputs, Gujjars and Brahmins together constitute over 30 percent of the voters (Fig.4). Here political parties select their candidates on the basis of caste composition in the

constituency. The voting in elections and mobilisation of political support from top to bottom moves on the caste lines.



Source: Z-News (approximately).

Fig 4: Social Composition of Electorate of Haryana in 2014 Assembly election.

In 2014 haryana assembly election, it was a difficult task for BJP to garner votes from all caste. Credit went to BJP president Amit Shah who set up an electoral micro-management that helped his party to get majority. He identified and wooed castes disenchanted with the Congress. Another tactic was to split committed votes. He socially mapped Haryana and focused on Dalits, first dividing the All India Backward and Minority Communities Employees' Federation, set up by Kanshi Ram. Then, Shah deployed BJP's Dalit MPs and MLAs from other states in 90 constituencies. They mingled, sang bhajans, shared meals and stayed with Dalits, who were made to feel important. The big names weaned away from Congress & INLD were utilised. Shah also consolidated Brahmin and Bania support. And in the last move the 'Modi wave' coupled with anti-incumbency against Hooda Government and the support by the Sirsa-based Dera Sacha Sauda hoisted the BJP to get the magic 45+.

Jat Votes

The Jats (The dominant caste in the state) constitute 24.5 percent of the total electorate and play a decisive role in electoral politics of Haryana with sharp divisions influencing the outcome of the polls (Fig 4). Jats had voted for the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) of Om Prakash Chautala in 2000 but shifted their loyalties to Congress in 2004 and 2009. In 2014 pre-election scenario it was believed that Jat votes would be divided between the Congress and the INLD. While the Jats in Rohtak, Sonapat and Jhajjar might stand with the Congress because of the special concern shown by CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda towards the development of these districts, most of those in the rest of the state were expected to vote for Chautala's party (INLD). But the perception went unexpectedly and the Jats supported the BJP and Modi in the 2014 Lok Sabha. Though the Congress attempted to assuage them by giving them reservations, but it did not work in assembly elections. The fact that the Jat community has shown that it was open to change is very significant with a sizeable segment shifting loyalty to the BJP. It was a great opportunity for the BJP to consolidate their support base among Jats. In order to capitalise this momentum, the BJP roped in its national secretary Abhimanyu into the campaign and used clout of other top Jat leaders Choudhary Birendra Singh, Krishna Gehlawat, Surendra Singh Barwala, who had defected to the party either from Congress or INLD.

Thus in 2014, the fight for crucial Jat support was contested between BJP and INLD. Riding on sympathy wave, the

INLD's position could not be underestimated. Its resurgence since the Jind rally organised to mark Devi Lal's birth anniversary and former CM Om Prakash Chautala's whirlwind campaign gave a scare to the BJP. In order to counter this sympathy wave, BJP president Amit Shah in the last minute roped in Dera chief Gurmeet Singh, a traditional Congress supporter (Dera Sachha Sauda, Sirsa) to support the BJP and withdraw support to the Congress that was facing anti-incumbency. The Dera which opposed to the INLD all these years not only helped BJP to secure win in by or multi corner fight but also blunt the Akali edge, who were supporting the INLD. Thus with meticulous engineering electoral strategy, the BJP could break several new grounds in Haryana. It successfully managed to break INC and INLD's grip on the jat community, which had traditionally been voting for either party over the years. A seat like Rohtak, which was an INC stronghold and has a significant Jat influence, was lost to BJP. The story was repeated across constituencies.

Dalit Votes

The Dalit also play a crucial role in Haryana electoral politics. Dalit constitutes 19.3 percent (approximately) of the total electorate (Fig 4). Dalit had been the traditional supporter of BSP and Congress. But the Dalit shifted their loyalties this time. Of Haryana's 90 constituencies, 17 are reserved for scheduled castes and also SCs account for significant numbers in many general seats. In attempt to consolidate dalit support, Amit Shah worked to create divisions in the All India Backward and Minority Communities Employees' Federation (BAMCEF) set up by BSP founder Kanshi Ram in 1971. Some of its influential leaders were swung to the BJP fold and the party also scrambled its Dalit leaders from all over the country, who during the campaign toured Dalit villages, talked about the BJP, attended pujas and in many areas stayed in villages. The BJP's engineering electoral strategy worked handsomely and successfully turned Dalits in her favour.

Urban Votes

The non-Jat and urban voters proved instrumental in BJP success. Narendra Modi in his poll campaign in Haryana made centre the hero and state the villain, he said that his government at the Centre is willing to assist the state but the Hooda government is not cooperating as he is from Congress. He urged the masses to vote for saffron party so that this situation ends and centre government can help them.

It is believed that the urban voter mainly cast their vote to national party. Since the Congress was out of race and was facing the people's rejection. So the absence of alternate turned the mind of urban voter to support BJP. On the other side, the overtly Jat-party image of the INLD prevents it from gathering a broad support base, a strategy that the BJP could implement in the absence of the Congress party, the former "rainbow party" in the state.

Ahir/Yadav Votes

The Yadav/Ahir (mostly inhabiting Gurgaon, Rewari and Mahendragarh) constitute the large chunk of electorate of south Haryana. The BJP's winning combination in the Ahirwal region has been the entry of Rao Inderjeet Singh (a former Congress leader). He was a new entrant in the saffron party. He joined BJP just before the general elections after quitting Congress and ending his nearly 35 years long association with it. In 2013, as a Congress MP, he had also embarrassed the UPA government by openly demanding a probe into the land

deal of DLF with Robert Vadra, Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law (Economic Times, 2013). Also he openly accused Bhupinder Singh Hodda's government in discrimination in development. His dared decision and honest politics made him a lotus in the mud of politics. People regarded him as an honest person who placed duty before party line. After ousting from Congress, Rao Inderjeet made "Haryana Insaaf Manch" at Pataudi (Gurgaon) Insaaf Rally. He vowed to end up discrimination that his parliamentary constituency had to face, by defeating congress in the then upcoming elections. Rao Inderjit Singh, was made in-charge of Yadavs. Since Rao Inderjeet switched to BJP, his follower also shifted their loyalty to the saffron party. It was the magic of whirlwind campaign by Ahir stalwart Rao Inderjit Singh, that the saffron party for the first made a clean sweep by winning all the seven seats in the Ahirwal region. This has never happened in Rewari and Mahendragarh districts during the last 48 years after Haryana attained the statehood in 1966. Significantly, the party did not have even a single legislator from here in the previous government. Moreover, the five seats- Rewari, Kosli, Bawal, Ateli and Nangal Choudhry- were the ones where the BJP had never won. Significantly, the Congress could not win even a single seat despite fielding its heavyweight leaders in all Assembly segments, except Nangal Choudhry. Six-time MLA Capt Ajay Yadav, there time MLAs Rao Daan Singh, Anita Yadav and Rao Narendra and two-time MLA Rao Yadavendra Singh failed in garnering support.

Conclusion

The power shift was historic in Haryana, where the BJP party won absolute majority (47 seats) even with a skeletal structure on the ground. It has only four MLAs in the outgoing assembly. The Congress and INLD have lost both in terms of votes and appeal, and decimated to 15 and 19 seats respectively (Table 1). The final victory boiled down to clever caste combinations. The combination of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charisma and the deft planning and micro-electoral caste management of the BJP president Amit Shah helped the BJP get a majority on its own for the first time in Haryana's electoral history. The BJP's winning combination in the state has been consolidation of Dalits, Ahirs, Brahmins, and Gujjars. The BJP not only swept non-Jat areas of North and South Haryana, but also kept the influential Jat community, which forms approximately 24.5 percent of electorate. The magnitude of the BJP's victory is reflected in its vote share of 33.2, almost four times or 24.2 percentage points higher than in the 2009 assembly elections. In fact, for a party which had been a fringe player in caste-ridden Haryana politics, it is nothing short of a dream come true to form a government in the Jat-dominated state where the Congress and the INLD had played a dominant role in recent decades. The results indicate that the era of piggy back riding its way to power are over for the BJP. The BJP will no longer play second fiddle to the regional parties in the future.

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