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Valerian Rodrigues

Elections and Civil Society
in India

2014

Würzburger Arbeitspapiere zur Politikwissenschaft und Sozialforschung

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Preface:

Professor Valerian Rodrigues takes part in the exchange program *A new passage to India* and visited the Institute for Political Science and Sociology (IPS) this summer for the second time. He held a class on “Politics in India” and, furthermore, co-chaired the class “Problems of the Constitutional Democracy” with PD Dr Michael Becker. Moreover he held various lectures, including speeches in a series of lectures on “Diversity” and, at the conference “Exploring Emerging India”. The article “Elections and Civil Society in India” published in this volume combines the scripts of both events. We are grateful to Lukas Lemm for editing work on the text.

Vorwort:

Prof. Valerian Rodrigues nimmt am Austauschprogramm *A new passage to India* teil und besuchte diesen Sommer bereits zum zweiten Mal das Institut für Politikwissenschaft und Soziologie (IPS) als Gastprofessor. Er leitete ein Seminar zum Thema “Politics in India” und war zudem in das Seminar “Probleme der konstitutionellen Demokratie” von PD Dr. Michael Becker eingebunden. Darüber hinaus hielt er verschiedene Vorträge, unter anderem im Rahmen der Vortragsreihe “Diversity” und bei der Konferenz “Exploring Emerging India”. Der hier erscheinende Artikel vereinigt Manuskripte beider Veranstaltungen unter dem Titel “Elections and Civil Society in India”. Für die Erstellung dieser Publikation möchten wir Lukas Lemm danken, der gewissenhaft die Textdurchsicht sowie die Prüfung von Literaturlisten und Verweisen übernommen hat.

Elections and Civil Society in India

Valerian Rodrigues

Abstract

The analysis of the 2014 elections to Lok Sabha in India describes the results and their enormous extent with a differentiated regard to social group voting. Considering the election campaign's performativity and issues of contestation the landslide victory of BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) will be illuminated. Through a closer examination of party coalitions, the electoral system, and the leadership factor the BJP's clear victory over Congress Party will be explained. Besides the opportunity for significant economic and political reforms, the author conjectures a potential for dangerous tendencies to Indian democracy owing to such a resourceful government, which are compared with the government constraints, especially by federal arrangements.

The second part of the article argues that civil society in India is composed of several layers that are distinct and overlap at the same time. Five versions of the same are significant: 1) institutions avowing secular nationalism that upholds inclusive citizenship, equality of treatment, and non-discrimination; 2) a phalanx of institutions inspired by the Gandhian idea of swaraj that are deeply wary of the state and its apparatus and envisage a life of freedom constituted around self-determining associations built from below; 3) such orientations and impulses which stress on religiously inspired values and traditions with its archetypal representation in Hindu nationalism; 4) those who highlight difference and diversity as central to Indian society and stress this fact as foundational to Indian nationalism; 5) and those who are in favour of a right-based approach to citizenship and rule of law in India. Alluding to these distinctive domains constitutive of civil society in India the paper argues that the success of the Bharatiya Janata Party, and the coalition that it led, in the General elections of 2014 rested on its ability in tapping resources from different layers of civil society while making institutions woven around Hindu identity as its anchor.

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Zivilgesellschaft, Politische Parteien und Wahlen in Indien

Abstract

Die Analyse der Wahlen 2014 zur Lok Sabha in Indien beschreibt die Resultate und ihr enormes Ausmaß mit einem differenzierenden Blick auf das Wahlverhalten sozialer Gruppen. Durch die Betrachtung der Performativität des Wahlkampfes und den Wahlkampfthemen wird der Erdrutschsieg des BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) beleuchtet. Mit einer genaueren Sicht auf die Parteienkoalition, das Wahlsystem und den Faktor der "leadership" wird der klare Sieg des BJP über die Kongresspartei erklärt. Neben der Möglichkeit für weitreichende wirtschaftliche und politische Reformen vermutet der Autor, aufgrund der Ressourcenfülle der Regierung, für die indische Demokratie gefährliche Tendenzen, welche den Beschränkungen der Regierung gegenübergestellt werden, insbesondere den Föderationsvereinbarungen.

Der zweite Teil des Artikels führt das Argument an, dass die Zivilgesellschaft in Indien aus verschiedenen Schichten besteht, die sich nicht nur unterscheiden, sondern gleichzeitig auch überlappen. Es gibt hierbei fünf wesentliche Versionen: 1) Institutionen, die sich zu einem säkularen Nationalismus bekennen, der inklusive Staatsbürgerschaft, Gleichbehandlung, und Nicht-Diskriminierung unterstützt; 2) eine Phalanx von Institutionen, die von Gandhis Idee des *swaraj* inspiriert ist, sich erheblich vom Staat und seinem Apparat unterscheidet und von einem Leben in Freiheit durch von unten aufgebaute, selbstbestimmende Verbände ausgeht. 3) Solche Orientierungen und Impulse, die religiös inspirierte Werte und Traditionen betonen mit einer archetypischen Darstellung des hinduistischen Nationalismus; 4) solche, die Unterschied und Vielfalt der indischen Gesellschaft als zentrales Kennzeichen identifizieren und zum Fundament des indischen Nationalismus akzentuieren; 5) und solche, die sich für einen rechthebasierten Zugang zu Staatsbürgerschaft und Rechtsstaatlichkeit in Indien aussprechen. Anspielend auf diese charakteristischen Bereiche, die die indische Zivilgesellschaft ausmachen, argumentiert der Artikel, dass der Erfolg der Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) und der von ihr geführten, aus den Parlamentswahlen 2014 hervorgehenden Koalition, auf der Fähigkeit basiert, Ressourcen aus verschiedenen Schichten der Zivilgesellschaft zu erschließen, während sich Institutionen um hinduistische Identität weben und damit als Anker fungieren.

Content

1 Indian Elections 2014: An Assessment.....	6
1.1 Introduction.....	6
1.2 A Bird's Eye-View of the Elections	6
1.2.1 Parties, Vote Share, and Number of Seats Won	6
1.2.2 Election Results and Vote Share of Leading Parties	8
1.2.3 Extent of Realignment	11
1.3 The Issues in Contestation	15
1.4 The Packaging and Marketing of the Elections	17
1.4.1 The Prelude	17
1.4.2 Campaigns: Principal actors; support structures.....	18
1.4.3 Media; Social Media; advertisement	18
1.4.4 Audience	18
1.4.5 Symbolisms.....	18
1.4.6 Violation of Election Code	19
1.4.7 Hate-speeches, crossing the barriers	20
1.5 Reasons for the Shift.....	20
1.5.1 Party Coalition	20
1.5.2 Social Coalition (Social Fabric).....	21
1.5.3 Electoral System	21
1.5.4 The regime in Power.....	22
1.5.5 The Anti-Corruption Movement.....	23
1.5.6 The RSS	23
1.5.7 The Leadership Factor	23
1.6 Conjectures and Refutations	24
1.7 Conclusion	25

2 Civil Society, Political Parties and Elections in India.....	26
2.1 Introduction.....	26
2.2 Civil Society as a Restricted/ Confined Domain?.....	27
2.3 India as a Vibrant Civil Society?	29
2.4 Political Parties and Regionalisation of the Indian Polity	33
2. 5 In what way the 2014 Elections are Exceptional?	35
2.6 Conclusion	37
Bibliography	39
Appendix.....	40

List of Tables

Tab. 1: Political Parties, Number of Seats won and percentage of Votes in 2014 Lok Sabha ..	7
Tab. 2: Nature of Shift in the key state of U.P.....	11
Tab. 3: Social Groups and Vote Share of Political Parties	11
Tab. 4: Muslim Voting Pattern	12
Tab. 5: Hindu and Muslim support to BJP and the Congress from 1996-2014.....	13
Tab. 6: Correlation between victory and Percentage of Vote in the Lok Sabha elections, 2009	22
Tab. 7: Percentage of Votes secured by National and State Parties in the Lok Sabha 1996-2014	35
Tab. 8: Social Bases and Vote Share of Political Parties.....	36

List of Figures

Fig. 1: Partywise Vote Share	9
Fig. 2: Indian Political Map after the 2014 elections.....	10
Fig. 3: A Mandate for Change	14
Fig. 4: The Down word Slide of Congress Vote.....	37

1 Indian Elections 2014: An Assessment

1.1 Introduction

India just went through its 16th elections to the Lok Sabha, beginning with the first election from 1952. The Lok Sabha is the directly elected house of the Indian Parliament, and the government is directly accountable and responsible to it under a parliamentary scheme of government. This election has invoked much attention in India, and many regard it as a watershed. This paper revolves around the following Questions: What has been the extent and scale of shift of membership and votes in the elections to the 16th Lok Sabha? What were the perspectives and issues in contention in this election? How the game of elections got played out to the benefit of the BJP in general and Narendra Modi in particular? How does one explain the remarkable shift marked by this election, particularly the victory of the BJP? And, what are the likely implications of this election?

1.2 A Bird's Eye-View of the Elections

The elections were held by the Election Commission in a staggered way, in 9 installments, spread over from April 7 to May 12, or 5 weeks, primarily for administrative and security reasons. On the eve of the elections India had 814.5 million registered voters, out of which 554 million, i.e., about 67 per cent exercised their votes. There were 466 parties in the fray, 6 of them national parties, 41 state level parties and the rest registered parties. There were about 6 million or 1.08 per cent votes cast as NOTA. The number of voters this round increased by 100 million from the previous election in 2009. Those of 18-19 years old alone were little over 23 million. 8,251 candidates contested for the 543 seats, 3235 of them independents. There were the two coalitions, the UPA and the NDA. While there are different estimates of the expenditure, many think it was one of the costliest elections in the world. Rs. 35 billion was the expenditure to the public exchequer alone.

While pollsters in India were busy conjecturing advantage to the coalition led by the BJP, what took many by surprise is the extent of victory, and the fact that the BJP on its own had obtained a clear majority in the Lok Sabha. The last time any single party had won a majority in the House was in 1984, thirty years ago. On the other hand the ruling coalition was down and out, the leading party, the Congress, securing only 44 seats, while it had won 206 seats in the previous election in 2009.

1.2.1 Parties, Vote Share, and Number of Seats Won

Tab. 1: Political Parties, Number of Seats won and percentage of Votes in 2014 Lok Sabha

Alliance	Party	Abbr	Votes	%	+/- in %	Seats	+/- in %	%
NDA	Bharatiya Janata Party	BJP	171,657,549	31.0	▲12.2	282	▲166	51.9
	Shiv Sena	SHS	10,262,982	1.9	▲0.3	18	▲7	3.3
	Telugu Desam Party	TDP	14,094,545	2.5	–	16	▲10	2.9
	Lok Janshakti Party	LJP	2,295,929	0.4	▼0.1	6	▲6	1.1
	Shiromani Akali Dal	SAD	3,636,148	0.7	▼0.3	4	–	0.7
	Rashtriya Lok Samata Party	RLSP	1,078,473	0.2	New	3	New	0.6
	Apna Dal	AD	821,820	0.1	–	2	▲2	0.4
	Swabhimani Paksha	SWP	1,105,073	0.2	▲0.1	1	–	0.2
	Naga People's Front	NPF	994,505	0.2	–	1	–	0.2
	National People's Party	NPP	2,39,301	0.4	New	1	New	0.4
	Pattali Makkal Katchi	PMK	1,827,566	0.3	▼0.2	1	▲1	0.2
	All India N.R. Congress	AINRC	2,55,826	0.4	New	1	New	N/A
	Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam	DMDK	2,079,392	0.4	▼0.4	0	–	0.0
	Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	MDMK	1,417,535	0.4	▲0.1	0	▼1	0.0
UPA	Indian National Congress	INC	106,938,242	19.3	▼9.3	44	▼162	8.1
	Nationalist Congress Party	NCP	8,635,554	1.6	▼0.4	6	▼3	1.1
	Rashtriya Janata Dal	RJD	7,442,323	1.3	–	4	–	0.7
	Jharkhand Mukti Morcha	JMM	1,637,990	0.3	▼0.1	2	–	0.4
	Indian Union Muslim League	IUML	1,100,096	0.2	▲0.2	2	▲2	0.4
	Revolutionary Socialist Party	RSP	1,666,380	0.3	▼0.1	1	▼1	0.2
Others	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	ADMK	18,115,825	3.3	▲1.6	37	▲28	6.8
	All India Trinamool Congress	AITC	21,259,684	3.8	▲0.6	34	▲15	6.3
	Biju Janata Dal	BJD	9,491,497	1.7	▲0.1	20	▲6	3.7
	Telangana Rashtra Samithi	TRS	6,736,490	1.2	▲0.6	11	▲9	2.0
	Communist Party of India (Marxist)	CPM	17,986,773	3.2	▼2.1	9	▼7	1.7
	YSR Congress Party	YSRCP	13,991,280	2.5	New	9	New	1.7
	Samajwadi Party	SP	18,672,916	3.4	–	5	▼18	0.9
Aam Aadmi Party	AAP	11,325,635	2.0	New	4	New	0.7	

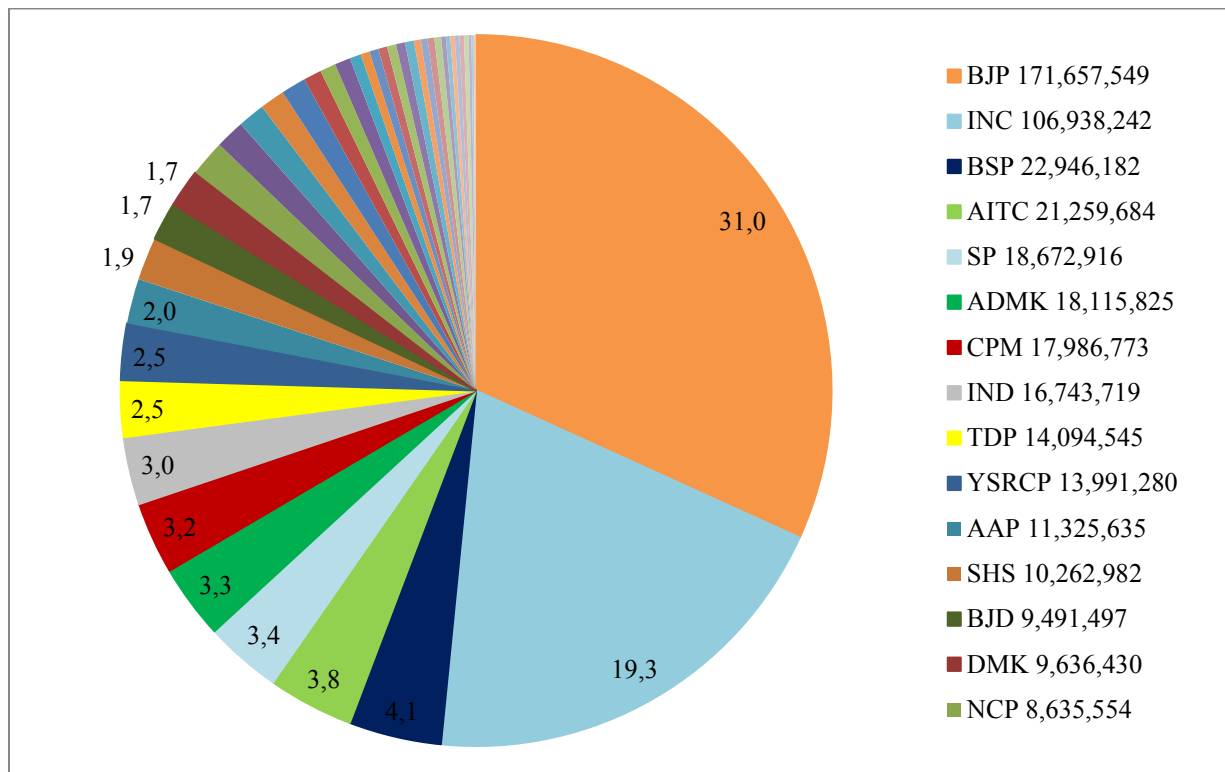
	All India United Democratic Front	AIUDF	2,333,040	0.4	▼0.1	3	▲2	0.6
	People's Democratic Party	PDP	732,644	0.13	New	3	New	-
	Janata Dal (United)	JD(U)	5,992,196	1.1	▼0.4	2	▼18	0.4
	Janata Dal (Secular)	JD(S)	3,731,481	0.7	▼0.1	2	▼1	0.4
	Indian National Lok Dal	INLD	2,799,899	0.5	▲0.2	2	▲2	0.4
	Communist Party of India	CPI	4,327,297	0.8	▼0.6	1	▼3	0.2
	Bahujan Samaj Party	BSP	22,946,182	4.1	▼2.1	0	▼21	0.0
	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	DMK	9,636,430	1.7	▼0.1	0	▼18	0.0
	Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Prajatantrik)	JVM(P)	1,579,772	0.3	▲0.1	0	▼1	0.0
	All India Forward Bloc	AIFB	1,211,418	0.2	▼0.1	0	▼2	0.0
	Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) Liberation	CPI (ML)L	1,007,274	0.2		0		0.0
	Bahujan Mukti Party	BMP	785,358	0.1		0		0.0
	Independent	IND	16,743,719	3.0	▼2.2	3	▼6	0.6
-	None of the above	NOTA	6,000,197	1.1	New	0	New	0.0
Valid Votes				100	–	543	–	100
Rejected Votes								
Total Polled				66.6%				

Source: Election Commission of India

1.2.2 Election Results and Vote Share of Leading Parties

It is important to point out that the BJP secured about 31 per cent of the votes but got a majority of the seats, securing 282 seats in a house of 543 members. The coalition that it led secured 336 seats. On the other hand the Congress' vote-share was 19.3 per cent but it secured only 44 seats. The third largest share of votes, 4.1 per cent were obtained by the BSP but it did not even get one seat. This has much to do with India's single-member district, simple plurality system or the first past the post system of voting, where the candidate winning the largest number of votes secures the seat. Parties that were focused on a region or ethnic group therefore reaped much benefit such as the AITC and AIDMK which although secured only 3.8 % and 3.3% of the votes cast, garnered 34 and 37 seats respectively (See Figure 1). The BJP had this multiplier effect in mind when it tied up with a large number of regional parties, all over India.

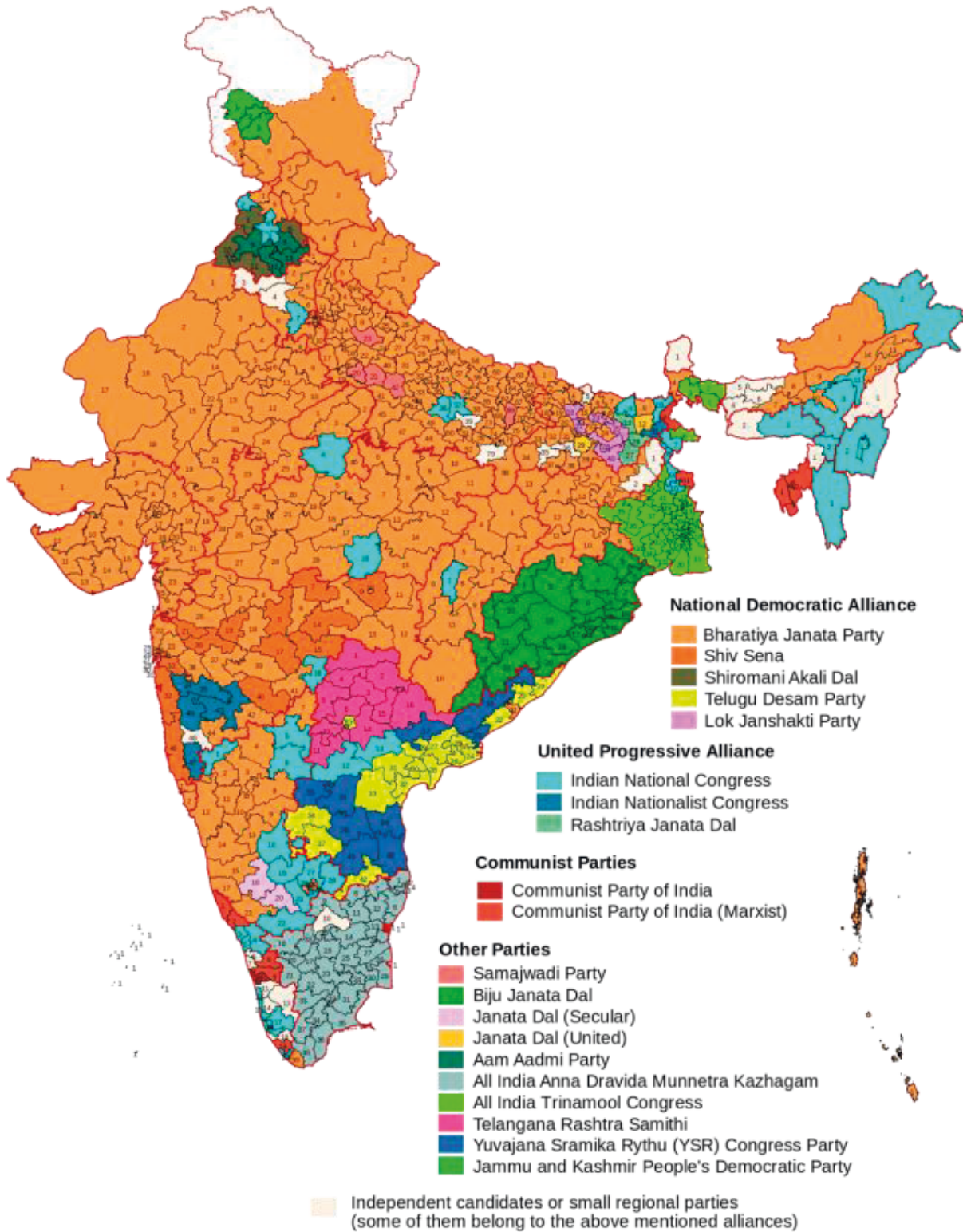
Table 1 also demonstrates that the shift of votes that the major national parties registered in 2014 was far more than in 2009. The gainers gained much more and losers lost greatly. Therefore the party/parties that have lost in this round cannot merely look to the prospects of the next election. They have to re-imagine their future almost in the form of reinventing themselves.

Fig. 1: Partywise Vote Share

Source: Based on data by the Election Commission of India (EIC)

Figure 2 (India Map) shows saffron colour, associated with the BJP, dotting the entire Northern, Central and Western landscape of India. It includes some of the poorest states of India, such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh with the richer states of Delhi, Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa. In fact in several states, the BJP secured all the seats as was the case in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Goa.

Fig. 2: Indian Political Map after the 2014 elections



Source: Based on data by the Election Commission of India (EIC)

1.2.3 Extent of Realignment

1.2.3.1 Redefining ethnic parties

The BJP has not merely reinforced its presence in the large contiguous land-mass of India, it has also badly affected the prospects of its primary opponents in several regions. The break-up of Andhra Pradesh has led to the consolidation of regional parties, against the incumbent, the Congress Party, by striking an alliance with one of them. In several states, the BJP succeeded in marginalizing caste and ethnic based parties. This was particularly the case in the Hindi heartland. For instance, for the past 15 years deeply rooted ethnic parties have been the mainstay of Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state in India. Table 2 shows the way BJP marginalized them in this election.

Tab. 2: Nature of Shift in the key state of U.P.

S.No.	Political Party	%age of Votes in 2009	Lok Sabha Seats in 2009	%age of Votes in 2014	Lok Sabha Seats in 2014
01	Bahujan Samaj Party	27.42	20	19.62	00
02	Indian National Congress	18.25	21	7.50	02
03	Bharatiya Janata Party	17.50	10	42.3	73
04	Samajwadi Party	23.26	23	22.20	05

We can see a similar process at work in Bihar as well. One of the distinctive hallmarks of this election was a significant shift of support of several key social groups, particularly in favour of the BJP (See Table 3).

Tab. 3: Social Groups and Vote Share of Political Parties

Categories	BJP	Congress	Left	Others	Change from 2009 (%)			
					BJP	Congress	Left	Others
All OBCs	34	15	3	49	+12	-9	-2	-1
Upper OBC	30	15	3	52	+8	-7	+1	-2
Lower OBC	42	16	3	39	+20	-11	-6	-3

Note: Figures are in per cent, rounded off and weighed by actual vote share of parties

Source: NES 2009, 2014, CSDS, Delhi

The Other Backward Classes are aggregates of disparate castes, sub-castes and traditional occupational groups. The estimate of the demographic strength of this group is disputed. The National Sample Survey (NSS), 2004-2005, estimates them as 41 per cent of the population of the country. Most of the regional ethnic parties were anchored on this sprawling constituency till recently. The National Election Studies (NES) demonstrates that the BJP not merely gained in this constituency as a whole, vis-a-vis the Congress and other regional rivals, but proved itself as the most decisive option to the lower rungs of the OBCs. It is important to recall that the latter were relatively neglected by the upper OBC-based regional ethnic parties,

although they claimed to speak for them. Alam has pointed out that while the reach of the BJP to OBC constituency remains uneven, “It almost swept the OBC votes in States such as Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. It also did quite well in those States that have long been the laboratory of OBC politics. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, not only did the BJP amass an overwhelming majority of the lower OBC vote but also got significant support from the upper OBC voters who have been religiously supporting prominent OBC leaders like Mulayam Singh, Lalu Prasad and Nitish Kumar.” The BJP, thereby succeeded, to an appreciable extent, in consolidating the Hindu vote, one of its major ideological endeavours through the years. But, in the process, it also put on notice such regional parties as the AITC, the BJD, the TDP, the AIDMK, the Shiv Sena and the SP, which largely rest on OBC support.

One of the social constituencies that took almost a centre stage in this elections were the Muslims, particularly due to the factor that official accounts projected this community to be downhill and the Congress led UPA regime had promised to do much for this community. The fear of Hindu-Muslim cleavage being reinforced was also a factor in the elections as the BJP was trying to consolidate the Hindu constituency. Several parties, including the Congress, projected the BJP as the enemy of the Muslims and appealed to their support, although in a language to circumvent the reprimand of the Election Commission. While the Muslims generally voted against the BJP, what is surprising is the slight increase in support for this party among them, in this election (See Table 4).

Tab. 4: Muslim Voting Pattern

	Congress	BJP	Others
1996	36	2	62
1998	32	6	62
1999	40	7	53
2004	36	7	57
2009	38	4	58
2014	38	8	54

Note: Figures are percentages; National Election Study conducted by CSDS in 2014, 2009, 2004, 1999, 1998, 1996

NES data also shows that in States where the Congress was in direct competition with the BJP, it got nearly three-fourths of the Muslim vote overall. On the other hand, States in which there were strong regional parties (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Delhi, Assam etc.) Muslim support for the Congress was around one-third, as the community also voted for the non-Congress options.

While, the BJP saw its vote share among Muslims rise to about 8 per cent at the national level compared to the 4 per cent it had five years ago, Hindu support to BJP increased from 22 per cent in 2009 to 36 per cent in 2014. But the upper caste Hindu support to BJP is much more pronounced. Table 5, provides an account of the upper caste support to BJP, and Muslim support to the Congress in the last 6 Lok Sabha elections. The upper caste polarisation in

favour of BJP is much greater than Muslims rallying for the Congress. While about two out of every five Muslims voted for the Congress in this election, upper-caste support for the BJP was one out of two. Even as the Muslims rallied behind non-BJP options, a counter Hindu upper caste and OBC consolidation — much greater in magnitude — seems to have rendered the Muslim votes ineffective, even in seats where Muslims have always been in a position to make a difference to the final outcome. Of the 87 seats where Muslims are over 20 per cent of the population, the BJP won 42 as opposed to just 15 seats in 2009.¹

Tab. 5: Hindu and Muslim support to BJP and the Congress from 1996-2014

	Upper caste vote for BJP (%)	Muslim vote for Congress (%)
2014	47	38
2009	29	38
2004	35	36
1999	40	40
1998	47	32
1996	35	36

Source: NES conducted by CSDS in 2014, 2009, 2004, 1999, 1998 and 1996

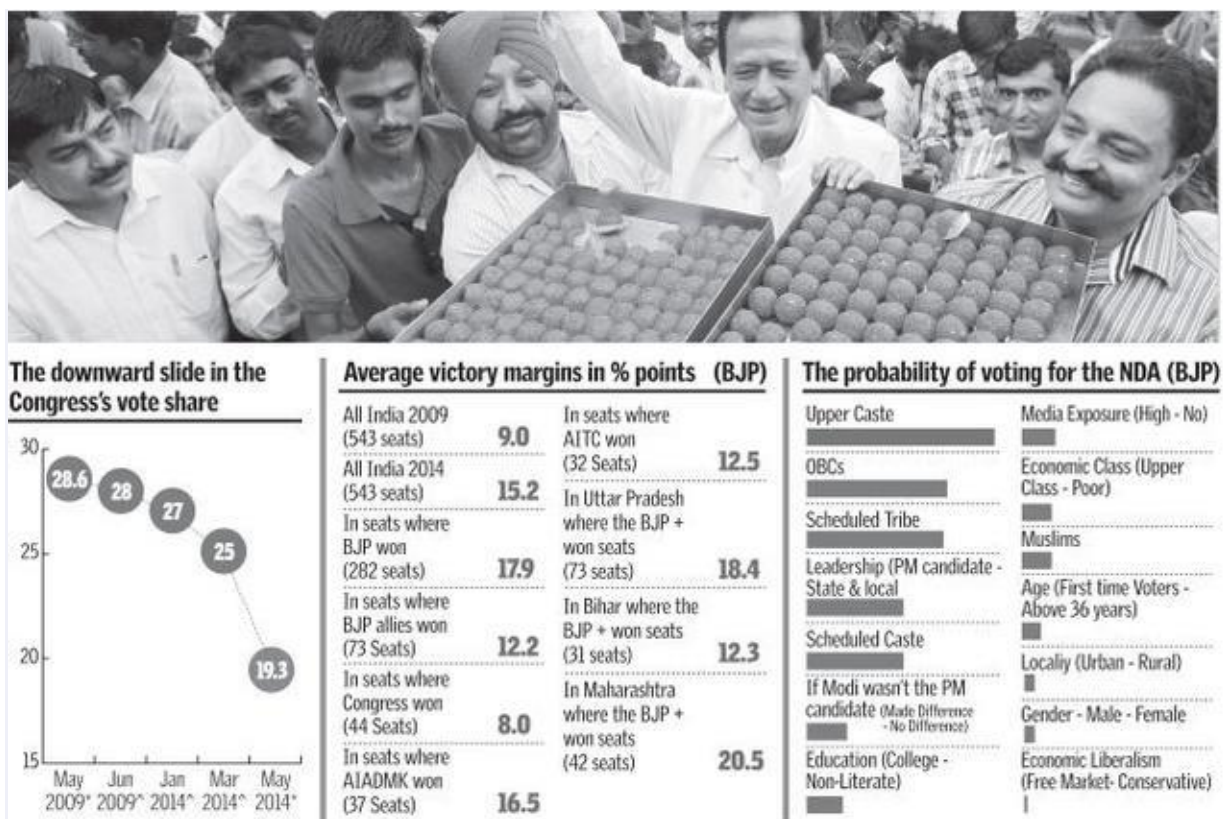
A significant proportion of the electorate in the elections of 2014 were first time voters. They turned out for voting in higher numbers (68%), than the population as a whole (66.6%). While this age-group did not favour the BJP in all states, in states where it did, such as Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan, it played no small a role in tipping the scales in favour of it.²

¹ Sanjeer Alam, “OBC support for BJP signals the end of caste politics”, *The Hindu*, June 3, 2014

² See Sanjay Kumar, “National Election Study”, *The Hindu*, May 28, 2014

1.2.3.2 Trend in Votes and Seats

Fig. 3: A Mandate for Change



Source: Pradeep Chibber and Rahul Verma “A MANDATE FOR CHANGE: It is Modi, not BJP that won this Election”, The Hindu, June 1, 2014

Highlighting the trend in vote in this election, Pradeep Chibber and Rahul Verma point out that the “the BJP has clearly replaced the Congress as the system-defining party. The BJP, not the Congress, is likely to become the focal point of electoral alignment and re-alignment in the coming elections.”³ They also argue that without the support of any ally, the BJP won a large chunk of votes in Jammu and Kashmir (36.4 per cent), West Bengal (16.8 per cent), Assam (36.5 per cent), Manipur (11.9 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (46.1 per cent), and Orissa (21.5 per cent). In Andhra Pradesh (Telangana and Seemandhra) and Tamil Nadu, the BJP has made important inroads with the help of alliance partners.

They also feel that a more careful look at the data shows the remarkable nature of the BJP’s victory. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP contested only 428 seats. The party won more than 50 per cent votes in 137 seats, and in another 132 seats it won more than 40 per cent votes. This is very unusual and unexpected given India’s recent electoral history. The data presented in figure 3 indicates how big the BJP’s victory was. The average victory

³ PRADEEP CHIBBER & RAHUL VERMA, “A MANDATE FOR CHANGE :It is Modi, not BJP that won this Election”, The Hindu, June 1, 2014

margin during the 2009 elections was 9.2 percentage points. In 2014, the average victory margin increased to 15 percentage points largely because many voters turned to the BJP. In many constituencies, the BJP-led NDA's vote share was greater than the vote shares of the first and second runner-ups combined. In contrast, the average margin of victory of Congress candidates much lower.

The Narendra Modi factor contributed greatly to the electoral success of the BJP. Survey data shows that most citizens preferred Mr. Modi as Prime Minister. Except in Kerala, Mr. Modi led his nearest rival Rahul Gandhi by a huge margin when voters were asked whom they preferred as Prime Minister. Mr. Modi was preferred by more citizens than those who wanted Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, and Manmohan Singh as prime minister put together. One in every four respondents who voted for the NDA said they would not have voted for the coalition had Mr. Modi not been the prime ministerial candidate.

Traditionally, the BJP has been associated with urban dwellers, upper castes, middle classes and the educated. The BJP did win a larger percentage of votes and seats in predominantly urban constituencies. However, its success in semi-urban and rural constituencies is extraordinary. A large number of non-traditional BJP voters such as Scheduled Tribes and the poor have voted for the party this time. Nationally, the BJP leads the Congress among both Adivasi and Dalit voters by a wide margin. It is the upper castes, the OBCs, and the Adivasis who together propelled the BJP to victory. The only parties who managed to stand up to the BJP wave in this election - the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, the Biju Janta Dal in Odisha, and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu — managed to retain a large chunk of the upper castes and OBC votes.

1.3 The Issues in Contestation

In popular parlance, the issues that deeply divide India are termed as secularism on one hand and Hindu nationalism or Hindutva on the other. The first argues for equality of citizenship and non-discrimination, freedom to profess, practice and propagate one's religion, and non-endorsement of any religion by the state. The second argues that Indian nationalism should be based on a set of core ideas that bind all Indians together, its institutions and mores, its morals and its culture. There is much twist and turn, on the conception of these issues, and Narendra Modi in his campaign speeches often termed secularism as nationalism. The BJP has often charged the Congress of practicing pseudo-secularism, by enticing minorities by evoking the fear of the majority. In turn, the Congress has termed the BJP as communal, out to drive a wedge between Hindus and Muslims, and thereby divide the country.

If we distance ourselves from the rhetoric, generally secularism in India is understood as according equal rights and respect, recognition to the deep diversity and difference galore in India, and stress on the need to evolve institutions and policies that can both sustain and be responsive to this diversity and difference. It may call forth variegated public intervention for the purpose. Its adversaries, however, have pointed out that this stance has weakened the social bonds and solidarities, favoured minorities at the cost of majority, weakened national security, and led to thin and weak policy pursuits both within and outside. The Hindutva

perspective lays stress on the unity of India, Hinduism as the foundational basis of this unity; equality of treatment and equality before law for all citizens; non-preference; integrating difference in an encompassing national unity; stress on centralized decision-making; and belief in the inherent vitality of Indian social fabric. However, its weaknesses are there for all to see, as it is likely to exacerbate ethnic, linguistic, regional and religious cleavages in India. In the name of sustaining social fabric it may favour existing modes of dominance, favouring big industry, dominant agrarian interests, the upper castes, and vested religious and cultural interests. It may favour strong patriarchal values in gender relations. There might be little place for social movements in this perspective and it might stress on reconciliation and organic bonds. It could also be strongly majoritarian, and is likely to appeal to an integral Hindu identity.

These two perspectives, are available for multiple readings, in contexts, and sometimes politicians and administrators have declared them as vacuous. While specific elements of these perspectives are indeed contested, they cannot be termed vacuous, as India's public debates, Court judgements, and critical intellectual exertions have sharpened the cleavage across these perspectives over the years. It is also important that there are specific social constituencies that have arraigned themselves, favouring one or the other perspective.

We may, however, find politicians pick up a mix of these perspectives, on pragmatic considerations. Electoral arithmetic in regions often makes them resort to such poaching across social constituencies and interests. But given the nature of public debate and the intensity of political competition, the roadmaps that politicians lay out remain highly tentative, eventually making them to tilt to one or the other direction sketched above. There is a third and fourth position that is possible: The third position may suggest disparaging competitive politics altogether, and replacing authority on some other foundation. While there are ejaculations of this kind in private, there are few who regard it as a political possibility. The fourth alternative is posed by the communists, who promise a different kind of politics. Overall, they are a shrinking lot in India. Among the existing lot of parties calling themselves communist, the stronger group generally endorses a variant of the secular position. Another group, the CPI (Maoists) popularly known as Naxalites, call for an armed protracted struggle to overthrow the existing constitutional order in India to radically overhaul social relations. While they have their pockets of influence, they are either confined or they are a waning influence.

Often the manifestoes of political parties in India read alike, and they employ 'catch all' phrases. The key to reading these manifestoes, however, is which ideological location they come from, and where they differ from others. If we look at the manifestoes of the Congress and the BJP, 2014, they almost mark the same constituencies for special regard: But the Congress primarily stresses on development, promises to advance the rights of various sections of the population, and institutional reforms. The BJP manifesto highlights the slogan, Ek Bharat, Shrest Bharat (One India, Eminent India) frontally, followed by, 'Sabka Saath, Sabhka Vikas' (With Everyone, Progress of Everyone). It avoids the rights language, and talks of the good and empowerment of different sections, and quality of life. It lays much stress on competitive economy, brand India, good governance, institutional integrity, and

nation as the first priority of its foreign policy. Such a discerning reading can tell us a lot about the direction of march of the new government in saddle.

1.4 The Packaging and Marketing of the Elections

1.4.1 The Prelude

Modi was anointed as BJP's Prime Ministerial Candidate about a year ago: There were four factors that led up to this acceptance, in a party that was a still a cacophony of many voices, and brimming ambitions: The insistence of RSS, the invisible hand behind the BJP, in this regard⁴; the initiative that Rajnath Singh, the president of BJP, took in installing Modi as the Prime-ministerial candidate against the opposition of some of the senior leaders of the Party such as L.K.Advani and Sushma Swaraj; the slogan- shouting brigades of young supporters of Modi on the streets who demanded such declaration; and the distinct interest that a large number of corporate houses had displayed in such a choice. Modi dutifully accepted the invitation at the Goa conclave of the party, in the presence of the entire pantheon of the party, except L.K.Advani. The glittering stage in Goa was set to project almost the imperial presence of Modi. This event made Modi a distinct factor from the Party, a fact that has been reiterated throughout the outlay of the election campaign. Having crowned Modi as its Prime Ministerial candidate, the BJP challenged the Congress to declare its candidate to the post, a bait that the media swallowed immediately and played footsie to it. The BJP also tried to mock Rahul Gandhi, the Congress contender to the post, as still a toddler, hiding behind the mother, Sonia Gandhi. While there was no clamour in 2014 that an Italian cannot be the leader of India, as in 2004, Sonia Gandhi was projected as having her first loyalty to Italy rather than India, and as someone who put the interests of her son before the nation. The BJP was cleverly reconstructing the two values that it has invoked nationalism and motherhood to corner Sonia Gandhi.

On the other hand, the Congress rebuttal of the demand to declare a prime-ministerial candidate was mild, and its refusal to do so was ascribed to the Congress tradition. The Congress could have strongly rallied behind the defense of parliamentary institutions in India and the nature of competitive elections under the coalition system. Against the language of governance and nationalism that the BJP employed, particularly in the background of huge corruption charges against the incumbent regime, Rahul Gandhi tried to act the philosopher, defending the right-based approach, and how the Congress is wedded to it. But the right-based approach advocacy could not take wind out of the sail of nationalism, particularly when the media was singing peons to it.

Once Modi was declared as the Prime-Ministerial candidate there was some attempt to placate the sulking octogenarian L.K. Gandhi, but nothing beyond stressing party-unity. Everyone knew where the new power centre was. Modi quickly went about forging local level alliances with small parties. On the other hand, the alliance partners of the Congress were either bickering, or deserting.

⁴ The BJP leaders themselves have used such metaphors as compass (Amit Shaw), and monitor (Arun Shourie) to describe the relation

1.4.2 Campaigns: Principal actors; support structures

Modi wore strongly Indian looking clothes, with designer looks. Sporting a beard, and being at ease with the crowd, he addressed them in simple but direct Hindi. He spoke of jobs, development, integrity of social fabric in India, national security, less government and effective governance, revival of traditional industry, and pointed out the example of Gujarat to emulate. Rahul Gandhi on the other hand wore the Kurta and pyjama, sometime sporting the stubble. He clearly appeared the 'other' speaking. There was no spontaneity and connect. The crowd did not seem to be focused on him, neither did he seem to be a fighter. On the other hand Modi's campaign was well-coordinated. At the epochal moments the leadership of the party was around, as in the case of Varanasi. It projected Modi as the team-man. On the other hand, Rahul Gandhi was there alone, without a second; and the only second that the media projected was his sister Priyanka Gandhi. Modi dismissed it as sister's love for the brother, and therefore a family affair, and not the love for the nation. Throughout the campaign, Modi never let go the 'nation' as his most precious possession.

1.4.3 Media; Social Media; advertisement

Some of the most important channels changed hands in India over a year ago, bought by corporate houses. The BJP ran one of the most focused campaigns. It already had an overwhelming presence in the social media. The social media has always been dominated in India by the upper castes and the middle classes and the BJP in general and Narendra Modi in particular was a rage before them. The language of inclusion that the Congress advertisements blared out was patronizing, and tried to project the poor, although the Congress regime in power in the ten years had widened the gap between the poor and the rich, and between the different layers of the poor and different layers of the rich. The Congress spoke of the Muslims, the dalits and the ethnic communities, and their future as its concern. But there were far many regional parties which promised bounties to these social groups in ample measure. The state governments took credit for effective implementation of central schemes, but threw the muck at the central government. In the process, much of the good work that the UPA regimes had done in the last ten years was snatched away from it.

1.4.4 Audience

Modi travelled 300,000 kilometers addressing 437 political rallies in 25 states during the period of political campaigning. His audiences were packed and were intense. A significant section among them were the youth, and they were mostly male. Rahul Gandhi too went on a hectic campaign, as did Sonia Gandhi, the Congress President. But Rahul Gandhi who was built as the contender to Modi by the media, was often shown as distraught, withdrawn and tired.

1.4.5 Symbolisms

There was a controlled projection of Modi as belonging to a backward caste, or OBC. There were also slides of his biography on display as being a tea-vendor, that much appealed to the audience desperate for upward mobility. But the Congress immediately brought before the public the story of his stalking a young married woman aided by Amit Shah, his close

lieutenant, but the father of the woman defended the measure as his request. The Congress's rights-language favouring a woman stalked by agencies of the state boomeranged, on the blistering charge of the BJP that atrocities on women have increased in India under the Congress regime. There was the case of Modi deserting his wife, to become a RSS *pracharak*. But the BJP worked over it and pointed out that it was a child marriage, and stressed on the value of renunciation in the Hindu tradition. His wife too made statements that she has nothing to complain against him. While the BJP spoke of building the Ram temple in Ayodhya, enacting a uniform civil code and scrapping Article 370 of the constitution in its manifesto, the language that it employed was much more of dialogue and consultation across conflicting interests. But Modi invoked Lord Shiva profusely, a deity widely respected by the OBCs in India. He also spoke of Dr Ambedkar, the iconic leader of Dalits, and how Maharaja Sayyaji Rao of Baroda, the ruler of a principality falling within Gujarat, was generous to him. He particularly invoked the Ganga, as the mother, a symbolism that is widespread across India. In the heartland of the tribal world he spoke the language of inclusion, and generously wore their headgears. In the process, Modi had inserted himself in the differentiated public mind in India as an interlocking bond.

1.4.6 Violation of Election Code

Given the intensity of elections, political parties can charge their opponents of violating various provisions of the Representation of People's Act. The Election Commission of India tends to inquire into such complaints, and takes appropriate decisions, on the basis of the explanation provided by those charged of the offence. Two of the charges leveled against major leaders came to be much played up by the media during the course of the elections: In the first case a senior leader of the Samajwadi Party, Aslam Khan of Uttar Pradesh said that Indian Muslims won the Kargil war of 1998 against Pakistan, invoking a religious element in the campaign, which did not have the kind of evidence that he was suggesting. On the other hand Amit Shaw, the coordinator of BJP elections in UP, and a close aide of Narendra Modi, was charged of having said in a public meeting in Muzaffarnagar, in Uttar Pradesh, that elections are the apt site to take revenge for the riots that preceded in that district a few months earlier, between Jats, a dominant Hindu caste, and Muslims. The Election Commission issued notice to both these leaders; While Amit Shaw tendered his apology to the Commission, Aslam Khan justified his action and for the reason was debarred from further campaigning in the election by the Commission. Amit Shaw became as visible as before, while Khan went into sulking.

But such deference to the orders of the Election Commission by Amit Shaw cannot be read as its principled commitments to institutions, at all cost. When the returning officer of Varanasi, did not give permission to Modi to hold an election meeting in a locality, with dense Muslim population, citing reasons of security, the BJP protested the measure both in Delhi and Varanasi. Arun Jaitley, a leader of the BJP, and a senior lawyer in the Supreme Court of India argued before the media that the Election Commission cannot debar a candidate from freedom of speech in his own constituency. The Commission however did not withdraw its order: The BJP had to be satisfied holding a massive road show, while there were rumblings in the Commission with regard to the procedural rectitude followed in the case. It is important to

recognize that the BJP took up this affront only two days before the final round of elections. It could not afford Modi being treated a Khan by the Election Commission, if such confrontation was to take place earlier!

1.4.7 Hate-speeches, crossing the barriers

While it is difficult to exactly pin down the intensity of hate-speech, couched as it is in local idiom, much of the hate speech revolved around the leadership: Modi was targeted for the mass-murder of Muslims in 2002, for his surveillance of a married woman in Gujarat and for the way he treated his wife. Modi often termed Rahul as Shahjeda, the crown prince, referring to his political dynasty. Sonia was accused of her love for Italy and for amassing power in her hands and undermining the office of the Prime Minister. The Congress retaliated by using such phrases as '*mouth ka soudagar*' (businessman of death), or '*ullu banana*' (be-fool) to characterize Modi. Much of the hate-speech, however, was confined to the local level. One of the most prominent sites for hate speech, however, was the social media.

The performativity on display during the election campaign, charted the course of power, decisively in favour of Narendra Modi. He became the most prominent face of the election. While there was some media leakage, prior to the election-campaign, regarding a fresh contest for leadership after the election, even a whisper of this kind became anathema, after the event. The Congress found it difficult to wriggle itself out from the charges of corruption leveled against it continuously from 2010. Even its flagship programmes such as MNAREGA, Food Security and Unique ID Scheme, were charged with maladministration and pilferage. The campaign of the Party appeared as if it was carried out with a millstone round its neck.

1.5 Reasons for the Shift

India has a multi-party system, and increasingly national parties, and regional parties with national ambitions, clash with ethnic or splinter groups of national parties at the state levels. Many of these ethnic or regional parties emerged in opposition to the Congress Party which was the dominant party at the All-India level till late 1980s. Quite a few of the latter would prefer a non-Congress coalition to that of the Congress. The BJP ran a successful coalition government from 1999 till 2004, which has resulted in some enduring networks. But the BJP is also perceived by many as subscribing to Hindu majoritarianism, dominated by the upper castes, being pro-corporatist and exclusionary. Besides, association of Modi with the 2002 massacre in Gujarat has recurred again and again, although there has not been legally tenable evidence for it so far. But it is also important to realize that many of the smaller parties at the local level seek complimentary partners on one hand and linkages with all-India parties particularly against a dominant local contender. The BJP was quick to reach out to them than the Congress.

1.5.1 Party Coalition

The BJP and particularly Modi went out of his way to befriend sub-regional parties in states. It, thereby, met the need of obtaining those few thousand votes, in the absence of which it would have lost a seat here or a seat there. BJP's impressive showing in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Maharashtra and even in Tamil Nadu owes greatly to this tactical move of aligning

with small local level parties. Its alliance with the TDP in Andhra Pradesh allowed it to make deep inroads in the state.

The Congress did not have either the opportunity to form such coalitions or simply did not work determinedly to explore such a possibility. In the process it missed out the great advantage of the multiplier effect, which such coalitions bring.

1.5.2 Social Coalition (Social Fabric)

One of the greatest achievement of this election is the wielding of a social bloc by the BJP. The BJP charged the Congress that it has fragmented the social fabric of India in the name of secularism. Instead of talking the language of Hindutva, it went about knitting a social bloc: it tried to incorporate the upper castes and backward castes into this bloc and appealed to the Dalit communities and Adivasis to join it. Secondly, by charging the Congress of minortarianism, it tried to polarize its vote-bank wherever it was necessary. Thirdly, it charged regional and ethnic parties of trying to split the polity by narrow appeals, without considering its impact on national unity; and fourthly it tried to appeal to a section of the Muslims by offering them developmental prospects. BJP also led an understated campaign that Modi belonged to an OBC caste with feeble means at his command.

1.5.3 Electoral System

As mentioned earlier India follows a First Past the Post system (FPTP). Under it the candidate securing the highest votes gets elected in a single member constituency. Therefore a candidate may win an election in a multi-cornered contest with much less than 50 per cent of the votes cast (See Figure 3). All the other contenders in the contest get eliminated in the process. The BJP while securing 31 per cent of the votes secured 52% of the seats while the AIDMK which secured 3.3% of the votes secured 6.8 per cent of the seats. While there has been some discussion with regard to the introduction of proportional system and multi-member constituencies, no one has seriously pursued it hitherto. It is widely held that FPTP contributes to political stability by favouring a party or a compact coalition to win the election. It is important to point out that at the state level while many parties have secured more than 50 % of the popular vote cast, at the Central level no party has been able to cross the 50% mark so far. The BJP is the first party to secure 52% of the seats with as small as 31% of the votes cast.

Tab. 6: Correlation between victory and Percentage of Vote in the Lok Sabha elections, 2009

Election Commission of India, General Elections, 2009 (15th LOK SABHA)

22- WINNING CANDIDATE'S ANALYSIS OVER TOTAL VOTES POLLED									
Name of State/UT	No. Of Seats	No. Of Candidates Secured The % Of Votes Over The Total Votes Polled In The Constituency							
		Winner with <= 10%	Winner with 11% to 20%	Winner with 21% to 30%	Winner with 31% to 40%	Winner with 41% to 50%	Winner with 51% to 60%	Winner with 61% to 70%	Winner with > 70%
Andhra Pradesh	42	0	0	0	24	17	1	0	0
Arunachal Pradesh	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Assam	14	0	0	0	6	7	1	0	0
Bihar	40	0	0	5	17	14	4	0	0
Goa	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Gujarat	26	0	0	0	1	18	7	0	0
Haryana	10	0	0	1	4	4	0	1	0
Himachal Pradesh	4	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0
Jammu & Kashmir	6	0	0	1	1	3	1	0	0
Karnataka	28	0	0	0	8	19	1	0	0
Kerala	20	0	0	0	0	16	4	0	0
Madhya Pradesh	29	0	0	2	4	18	3	1	1
Maharashtra	48	0	0	1	16	22	7	2	0
Manipur	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Meghalaya	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Mizoram	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Nagaland	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Orissa	21	0	0	0	5	11	5	0	0
Punjab	13	0	0	0	1	11	1	0	0
Rajasthan	25	0	0	0	2	10	13	0	0
Sikkim	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Tamil Nadu	39	0	0	0	9	28	2	0	0
Tripura	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Uttar Pradesh	80	0	0	22	38	12	6	0	2
West Bengal	42	0	0	0	0	27	15	0	0
Chattisgarh	11	0	0	0	2	7	2	0	0
Jharkhand	14	0	0	6	4	4	0	0	0
Uttarakhand	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Chandigarh	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Daman & Diu	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
NCT OF Delhi	7	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0
Lakshadweep	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Puduchery	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total Seats	543								

1.5.4 The regime in Power

One of the major reasons for the success of the NDA in general and BJP in particular was the incumbent regime, UPA II. Its track record of enabling the marginalized through several schemes is noteworthy and they made significant difference. But they were not enough to meet the aspirations. Moreover, these schemes came to be opposed by corporate interests as dole. They also bred opposition in the rural areas since on account of these schemes labour became expensive for large landowners. The opponents of these schemes often pointed out the pilferage and improper governance of these schemes. UPA II was also got mired in corruption and scams that unfolded one after another made it incapable of seizing initiative

for according clearance to several pending large projects. Corruption also bred conflicts between executive organs and organs of accountability, such as the Public Accounts Committee, and Comptroller and Auditor General of India. The opposition led by the BJP did not allow the Parliament to function for long intervals at several sessions of the Parliament. The government became a silent spectator in the process.

1.5.5 The Anti-Corruption Movement

One of the movements that undermined the legitimacy of the government was the anti-corruption movement, initially led by Anna Hazare. It soon attracted much public attention and people rallied behind its demands for a Jan Lokpal bill, a device through which practically the whole spectrum of governing institutions would have come under this watchdog. Such a demand was a major challenge to representative institutions. The Government tried to tally this demand for a while but in the process helped the movement to gather momentum.

One of the off-shoots of the Anti-corruption movement was the Aam Admi Party, which emerged as the second largest party in Delhi and ran the government for 49 days, in later part of 2013. It resigned when it could not table the Jan Lok Pal Bill in the Delhi Assembly, as it did not obtain procedural sanction for the same. But the anti-corruption platform proved too feeble to fight an election at the national scale. Much of the benefit of the movement, eventually accrued to the BJP.

1.5.6 The RSS

The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak sangh, with a phalanx of its affiliates, and millions of dedicated cadres extended full support to the BJP, and particularly to Narendra Modi. It got involved in the selection of Narendra Modi as the Prime Ministerial candidate from early on. There are some accounts of the deep engagement of the RSS in this elections. Hundreds and Thousands of RSS members and their groups leaders were actively involved in this election, from Over 42,000 branches all over India. They spread out to remote rural areas, in carriages named *Namorath*, particularly in UP, distributing materials and holding meetings. They collected impact of Modi speeches, and gave feedback. They kept a watch on BJP workers, to ensure that there was no dissent. Above all, they formed an army of professionals providing technical support for the entire outlay of elections.

1.5.7 The Leadership Factor

Modi has been able to capture the imagination of several layers of Indian society from early on. His decisiveness has been much appreciated. The corporate sector has expressed its support to him frequently. While he does not lack graces, he does not play second fiddle to any. Many people regard him as ruthless too. But the presence that he commands is enormous.

1.6 Conjectures and Refutations

What prospects and dangers does the new government hold forth?

1. It is a Necessary Corrective: This election is a major shift, much more than the 1999 election. In many ways it is a return to the lore, colour and language of the moffusil, the hinterland and the region. For long the language of politics in India as well as of the institutions had distanced itself from everyday life of a vast majority of people. In this sense it seems to be a corrective and a great expansion of democracy.

2. Better prospects for governance and industry: Undoubtedly big industry is likely to benefit a great deal from this victory. The big industry has welcomed this government with open arms.

3. Sustaining Dominance, of Class, Caste and Gender: Clearly the support base of NDA in general and BJP in particular will be a dominant bloc of class, caste and gender.

4. Exclusion: There are several groups and communities which are likely to experience a deep sense of exclusion as an outcome of this election. Noteworthy among them are Dalits and Muslims. India's 13.4% Muslims are heavily concentrated in some states (Assam, 31%, West Bengal, 26%, Kerala 25%, UP 18%), but major parties treated them a poor second, while allotting seats: BJP 5, Cong 35, CPM 15, CPI 3, BSP 48, SP 39, TMC 22. Out of the 282 elected members of the BJP there is not even a single Muslim. In the Muslim populous states such as Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka no one from the Muslim community was elected to the Lok Sabha. The representation of Dalits and ethnic groups is constitutionally fixed in India, i.e. 22.5 per cent. But the largest number of members elected from these groups and communities are in the BJP. The strongly Dalit and ethnic based parties such as the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha have been either eliminated or marginalised.

5. This government is likely to handle the issue of Kashmir, the Maoist armed insurgency in several parts of India, and the demands for autonomy and secession in the Northeast very differently from the previous regimes. Strong-arm tactics, and use of armed forces might be contemplated as an option by this government rather than resorting to other means.

6. Anti-democratic, authoritarian tendencies: The Modi government is likely to rule by flexing a lot of muscle. Writing in EPW, a veteran journalist Sumanta Banerjee, says, "In a more insidious way, the BJP government may concentrate on its long-term strategy of mutating the pluralistic ethos of our society into a hegemonic order of Hindu nationalism (epitomised by the slogan of "Hindu Rashtra").At the ground level, now that the BJP is in power, its foot soldiers and moral police will enjoy full liberty to suppress all expressions of dissent in the cultural arena (whether by forcing the banning of books, or vandalising exhibitions of paintings, or disrupting musical and theatrical performances".⁵

⁵ "The 'Discreet Charm' of the BJP", Vol. XLIX No. 24, June 14, 2014

7. Zingoism: The authoritarian, hierarchic and paternalistic, RSS organization has been solidly involved in this election, particularly extending personal support to Modi. The RSS cadre are known to enforce modes and styles of living as per their archaic values. Will this government beholden to such para-military outfit be able to assert its accountability to the electorate?

However, in spite of the enormous resources at the disposal of this government, there are inherent limits to its reach:

1. A vast majority of the electorate has not endorsed this government. While the BJP has secured 31 per cent of the votes, the NDA coalition has a whole has just about 39 per cent of the vote. Any attempt by the new government to tinker with the democratic ethos of the country is likely to meet with strong opposition.

2. Over the years India has evolved fairly effective institutional checks and balances against concentration of power: The NDA has no majority in the upper house of the Indian Parliament; the Supreme Court of India has been very zealous of its independence; and a majority of the state governments are run by parties that are not constituents of the NDA (See Table 9 in the appendix)

3. India has a vibrant civil society, and a highly developed party system. No government intent to rule with demonstrable results, as the BJP has promised, can afford to see that opposition to its rule becomes a permanent confrontation. While the RSS and its affiliate organizations may involve themselves in surveillance over civil society, their reach is inherently limited.

4. It is important to note that a majority of the vote of the BJP has come from the lower castes and the poor. Many of them have voted for Narendra Modi, by bonding with his caste as well. This factor, along with the complex task of governance, may make Modi to distance himself from the immediate agenda of the RSS, by extending to the latter certain token gratifications.

5. There has been much talk by footloose Indian intellectuals, and NGOs, comparing Modi with Hitler. So far there is little evidence, to suggest such a comparison. Contemporary India is a very different society compared to Germany of 1930s.

1.7 Conclusion

The NDA regime in power led by the BJP would definitely wish to shape the economy and polity in directions that we have spelled out above. It will be an interventionist government, trying to undo and dismantle many things from the past, and striving to build its own distinct architecture. All such interventions are likely to build their own momentum. But they are also likely to meet dogged opposition and challenge. For the time being, however, the scale is tilted favourably towards the regime. In fact many of the non-NDA state governments may strive to rebuild congenial relations with the regime, at least for the short run.

Although the opposition has become weak at the central level, much has changed in India constitutionally and otherwise in the federal relations in the last 25 years. States are relatively

autonomous actors. Besides, some of the parties such as the Congress are deeply entrenched in states. India's complex federal arrangements can restrain the extent to which the Central government can direct their action.

2 Civil Society, Political Parties and Elections in India

2.1 Introduction

The recent general elections in India (April-May, 2014) have evoked apprehensions with regard to a free society closely bound with such ideas as rights, deliberation, dissent, associational autonomy, public authority within limits, and accountability of the state, ideas that are closely linked to the literature on civil society. While civil society can be approached from different perspectives, in this paper I wish to explore the relation between elections, political parties, and civil society in India. This is a relational quest, on a substantive understanding of the idea of civil society. The questions that interest me are, how do contestations and differences that inform the civil arena affect elections? How do parties translate the myriad voices that a civil society is replete with into electoral possibilities? What is the role of the media in effecting such translation? And, does the civil society in India possess resources to defend India as a free society?

The genealogy of civil society does not lend itself to easy reading, and scholars and movements have employed the concept in variety of ways. The idea of civil society is also deeply nestled in a European setting. When such an idea, formulated in relation to other ideas, is taken out of its context and applied to another setting, with very different processes at work, the contestation gets further confounded. Tentatively, I wish to start off with Charles Taylor who in the essay, 'Invoking Civil Society', suggests that it is generally taken to be, "a web of autonomous associations, independent of the state which bound citizens together in matters of common concern, and by their existence or action could have an impact on public policy."⁶ He argues that two distinct conceptions of the relation between society and state have informed civil society in the West: The first emphasizes on the autonomy of the citizen community and its capacity for self-direction, tending to question the role of the state, while the second draws attention to a distinct sphere of non-political publics that modern society has thrown up, and its significance in containing arbitrary power. While Taylor points out the pitfalls that these conceptions can beget, particularly if subjected to one-sided emphasis, he does not pay much attention to conflicts in the relations across associations, the non-political public domain, that inform civil society. I wish to suggest that relations across associations that inform civil society could be deeply contentious. These contentions may beget short and long periods of stand-off demanding negotiation and trade-off between them, often requiring reevaluation of their self- understanding, and boundaries afresh. In a society such as India, with pervasive presence of deep differences, it would scarcely be possible to think of associational life, if we do not highlight the factor of contestations, and the distinct configurations of power that they can sustain.

⁶ Charles Taylor, "Invoking Civil Society", *Philosophical Arguments*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1995, P. 204

2.2 Civil Society as a Restricted/ Confined Domain?

The nature of civil society in India has precipitated a debate from different perspectives. I will just confine myself to the view that argues that the domain of civil society is very narrow in India, although the protagonists are not agreed to the reasons for the same. This view owes much to the work of the Italian Marxist philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, and is sympathetic to a radical social transformation. Two scholars are important in this vein: Sudipta Kaviraj and Partha Chatterjee. Sudipta Kaviraj has argued that the structure of the society in pre-colonial India was markedly different from, say Europe: The organization of social relations in this society was deeply asymmetric, different indices that marked relations across social groups assigning them into a distinct configuration of relations. There was much dispersal of power through such configurations, which also smothered defiance of the lower orders. In this order of things, the State, although manifested itself in great splendor and eminence, little reached down to localities and communities where the latter enjoyed considerable power of self-regulation. The state formed a circle of circles, each circle being a community of neighbourhood that was a mix of caste, religious denomination and occupation. The majesty of the state was marginal to everyday life and it had limited powers to interfere with a social segment's internal organization. How would one draw a boundary of a community or locate the site of his belonging in this context? It was 'fuzzy', and depended upon the contexts of enumeration. The later were encounters in which a person introduced or described himself who he was, which generally varied according to the situation. Being fuzzy did not mean uncertain, as it was clear in the different spheres of social interactions. Being fuzzy, however, it was not worked out in magnitudes and numbers. If someone was asked the question, who he was, he would reply to it depending upon the context of enumeration. New groups entered this society by forming a circle of their own, in the segmented structure of relations.

However, colonial power could not be satisfied with eminence on one hand and marginality on the other. It was deeply imbued with ideas of modernity and therefore introduced changes in the economy, the legal regime etc., and transformed fuzzy identities into enumerated ones. Its idea of the state as the representative of the collective interest of society made it to intervene in relatively autonomous circles of communities, and introduce a different common sense in society through education. In this context, it was not the fuzzy identities, but enumerated identities, crafted through census and other modes of enumeration that became central. While the upper layers of society were drawn to this new reason of organizing relations introduced by colonial modernity, the lower orders in India were differently coded and were not available to the discourse constructed from above.

Kaviraj further argues, the nationalist movement in India thought that some of the 'forward' measures introduced by colonial modernity were irreversible. Although there were differences within this movement there was a shared agreement with regard to the essentials, and a shared language across differences. But this language rarely encompassed the lower orders that could have created 'a common thicker we-ness'. There were assertions of the lower orders occasionally but "the main Congress leadership was able to shut off such space, or bring their movements under control. Thus the support that the Congress leadership received was not of the kind that the bourgeoisie of classical bourgeois revolutions of the West created for

themselves by reconstituting through a process of prior cultural movement a hegemony and directive pre-eminence for themselves.”⁷ Therefore in India there was not a developed civil society, and ‘many of capitalism’s classical initiatives within civil society were undertaken by the state.’⁸ From such a stand one can imply, that civil society in India was weak, and in a way beholden to the state. Kaviraj thinks that such a state order has been in crisis, and along with it the state-civil society relation too. With the breakdown of the elite consensus in 1960s political behaviour has led to the discrediting of institutions and “sometimes popular anger against such political games has assumed a form in which it seems that it might pass into a vote of no confidence on the state-form itself.”⁹ The more the people have entered politics “the greater the pressure or threat has been on democratic structures.”¹⁰ There is increased assertion of the “lower discourse.”¹¹

Partha Chatterjee has argued¹² that civil society understood as the domain of ‘equality, autonomy, freedom of entry and exit, contract, deliberative procedures of decision-making, recognized rights’ etc. has a limited reach in India. Therefore, he posits another domain in between the state and civil society, that he terms political society. According to him political society is ‘the domain of institutions and activities where several mediations are carried out. The social unit of political society is not the citizen but population. Terming political society as populations, allows governmental functions, a set of rationally manipulate-able instruments for reaching large sections of the inhabitants. These populations were incorporated in the national movement initially, and in the present, mobilized by modern associations such as political parties. This political mobilization has had a tenuous relationship with civil society. It is democracy that channels popular demands on to developmental state. Given the fact that democracy here is not informed by civil society, many of the mobilizations in political society are founded on violations of law; there is a demand of governmental welfare as a matter of right; these rights are invoked as collective rights, and the state deals with such claimants as population groups. In other words, for Partha Chatterjee, Indian civil society and democracy do not confirm to its standard versions in the West, because India does not have a developed bourgeoisie society as in the West.

In other words, both for Kaviraj and Chatterjee, the relation between Indian State, democracy and civil society is articulated very differently and this relation constitutes a differential specifica for the understanding of the political dynamics of India.

I beg to differ with this argument, although I agree, that there is no single journey that directs the course of societies even under conditions of Modernity. Given the way societies are structured a plurality of responses are possible and which in turn re-structure societies very

⁷Sudipta Kaviraj, “On State, Society, and Discourse in India”, in *The Imaginary Institution of India*, Ranikhet, Permanent Black, 2010, p. 24. It is important to recall in this context that ‘hegemony’, ‘directive role’ etc. are central in Gramsci’s explanation of class relations (See, Geoffrey N. Smith and Quintin Hoare, eds., *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, New York, International Publications, 1971).

⁸ Ibid, p. 25

⁹ Ibid, p. 31

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 32

¹¹ Ibid, p. 33

¹² See Partha Chatterjee, “On Civil and Political Society in Post-Colonial Democracies” in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani, eds., *Civil Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 165-178

differently. I feel, that the explanations offered by Kaviraj and Chatterjee are inadequate to explain the nature of civil society and political dynamics in India. The notion of civil society that they espouse is far too formal, and limited, and they have little place for the different kinds of differences that mark civil society, and consequently the political dynamics in India.

2.3 India as a Vibrant Civil Society?

For long, evolution of associations and institutions in 19th century India till the time of independence in 1947 was attributed to the British impact, by way of imitation and opposition or by the opportunities afforded by the new dispensation. A per this explanation, sections of Indians who came into contact with the colonial rule, as well as the British way of life as a whole, took initiative in building up a phalanx of economic, political, literary, artistic, religious and other bodies in association with their fellowmen, and sometimes with their rulers themselves, based on the belief that their own future was akin to those in Britain, or for that matter in Europe. This endeavour resulted in the formation of a large number of clubs, business bodies, trade-unions, literary associations, educational pursuits, religious organizations, newspapers and journals, theatre and art groups, and a range of professional bodies that came to dot India from the later part of the 19th century. Some of these associations, being the expressions of the liberal spirit, took on a life of their own, even though initially they often took their cue from their colonial or European counterparts. The nationalist endeavor in India did not necessarily supplant this endeavor, but often threw up parallel associations, and sometimes revisited the existing institutions with specific nationalist flavor. Nationalists sometimes substituted local languages for English as in the media and schools. Sometimes there was also an attempt to infuse a different spirit to institutions and associations as the Nobel laureate for literature, Rabindranath Tagore tried to do when he set up the Viswabharati University at Shantiniketan, in Bengal.¹³ It is the Indian National Congress which tried to wield this associational life into the idea of the nation, thereby ensuring its encompassing presence for long. The oppositional and differential threads of this associational life came to be reconstructed by the left wing and the Communists differently, sometimes begetting associations of their own or by infiltrating into the existing associations. Whatever, their differences, they shared a common framework of understanding, normative design, and linguistic resources and skills. Several parties in India link themselves to this nationalist ethos and call themselves as secular in their orientation. They might have their own distinct social bases of support, but they uphold inclusive citizenship, equality of treatment, and non-discrimination. Let us call this as Civil Society version 1.

Gandhi brought in a distinct emphasis to such associational life. He envisaged a life of freedom, or *swaraj* as he called it, constituted around self-determining associations built from below, with as little dependence on wider networks. Such a pursuit demanded self-reliance and inculcation of varied skills without recourse to external resources, unless they were absolutely required to reproduce self-reliance itself. He was deeply wary of the state and its apparatuses, and saw them as inversely related to self-governance. He set up an extensive

¹³ For an account of the rise of such associations see, A.R.Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1946; and Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, New Delhi, Anamika, 1966

network of village and *khadi* (hand-woven cloth) institutions, took much interest in publishing books and journals, and setting up his Ashrams, i.e., communities of shared ideals and living. He was particular to insist on efficiency in the associations with regard to the purpose they set for themselves and the means they employed for the same. He himself took much interest in embedding these two-fold objectives in the organizational working of the Congress. He inspired or took initiative in building up a phalanx of institutions of industrial labour and of the rural poor. It is important to stress that his emphasis on non-violent mass movement, resulted in numerous platforms where people came together to deliberate, to protest and involve themselves in public action. It has been rightly pointed out that his initiatives led to smothering the cleavage that existed between the elite and the masses.¹⁴ While Gandhian influence in contemporary India is thin, it is pervasive. There are numerous civic associations that trace their legacy to him, and bear on their mast the ideal of self-governing civic domain. However, beyond some socialist groups committed to a decentralized polity and economy, the Gandhian element has little bearing on the working of the party system in India. Let us call this as Civil Society Version 2.

There also emerged in India from early on a tendency to rest nationalism on religious/cultural belonging. In 1923, V.D. Savarkar declared that all those who inhabit India, and participate in its values and culture, and consequently regard it both as the land of one's birth as well as sacral land belong to Indian nationality. While such a position was inclusive of diverse sects and communities that formed Hinduism, including religions born in India such as Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, it was exclusionary towards religions such as Islam and Christianity. Subsequent attempts by organizations such as National Voluntary Corps (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or RSS) to reinforce the cleavage between Hindus and the rest and consolidate a thicker bond within Hindus reinforced this tendency further. Meanwhile a section of the Muslims veered round the idea of a distinct nationality, Pakistan, apprehensive of the dominance of Hindus in a United India which overtime gathered great mass support in regions where Muslims were a significant section of the population. Hindu consolidation, however, proved a distant dream, given the caste, ethnic and linguistic cleavages across the country. This turn to nationalism has thrown up a large number of civic associations, some of them working hand in hand with a party close to their ideal. The Bharatiya Janata party, and its earlier avatar, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, are closely linked to the ideal of Hindu nationalism while agreeing to constitutional demands of equality of citizenship and non-discrimination. The RSS has spawned or inspired hundreds of organizations, termed the *Sangh Parivar*, many of them with numerous branches and affiliates, which include the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, the largest apex trade union of India, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the organization spearheading the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya, Rashtriya Sevika Samiti, the women counterpart of the RSS, Akil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, an All India student body, Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram, a network of organizations active in India's tribal world, Seva Bharati, the largest network of schools in India, etc. Let us call this formation as civil society Version 3.

From early on in 19th century, there emerged in India a reading and critique of the prevalent social relations through the methodological route of liberalism (also republicanism), i.e., to

¹⁴ Sudita Kaviraj, op. cit., p. 23

what extent Indian social structures and institutions have stood in the way of human reason, human dignity, gender equality, and freedom of choice. Such a position not only criticized the existing institutions as falling short of such ideals, but also attempted to probe into India's complex past and tried to resurrect ideas and strands of thought conducive to the realization of such ideals. In the process they also tried to define the liberal project in significantly new ways, and were given to a deeply ambivalent relationship to colonial modernity. Mahadeo Govind Ranade, a political thinker and judge in 19th century Western Maharashtra, looking into the numerous texts of the past argued that classical India, i.e., the India of the Vedic period privileged search for truth, was against rituals and upheld gender equality, and freedom. He argued that ritualism and paternalism, and religious authoritarianism in India was a post-Vedic development.¹⁵ On the other hand, Jotirao Phule, primarily saw such virtues prevailing in India in the pre-Vedic period. He argued that with the triumph of Aryanism the social structures of *Jati* and *varna* came to the fore.¹⁶ The non-Brahmin movement in South India, was of the view that the Dravidian civilization was superior to *Brahminism*, that eventually came to be triumphant all over India.¹⁷ In other words, these strands of thought attempted to make forays into the past, to retrieve, a set of approaches and norms, that could reconstruct the future. In fact Ranade argued that the Bhakti or devotional movement that spread in Western India in the 12th century was a great leveler, and assertion of human dignity, that weakened and undermined the rigidity of the caste order and forged a thick sense of 'we-ness', eventually realized in the Maratha Power of Shivaji.¹⁸ Later Dr B.R.Ambedkar, was of the view that Indian history would be very different if it is pursued through the lens of Buddhism, and the kind of human emancipation it sought. It is important to point out that a large number of Indians came to identify themselves with these arguments. These writings postulated a markedly different understanding of pre-colonial India, and developed a critical approach towards mainstream national movement led by the Congress. These identities and understandings had their bearing in throwing up numerous civic initiatives, and establishing a distinct axis to the imagining of democracy in India.

The nationalist understanding was not merely elite liberal universalism writ large. From early on the place for 'difference' put a major question mark before any homogenous understanding of nationalism. One of the sites of marking the difference was religious belonging. Many Muslim thinkers felt, that Muslims are likely to be reduced into a permanent minority, if Hindus reconstitute themselves on the basis of their religious identity into a national majority. At the same time it has to be noted that Muslims did not speak in one voice. There were/are different sects and communities within Muslims as there are among the Hindus. While the Ahil-i-Hadis did not wish to follow any school of jurisprudence or *silsila*, and sought to base

¹⁵ See, Mahadeva Govind Ranade, *Religious and Social Reform: A Collection of Speeches*, M.B. Kolasker, ed., Bombay, Gopal Narayan And Co., 1902,

¹⁶ Jotirao Phule, 'Gulamgiri' (Slavery) in G. P. Deshpande, ed. *Selected Writings of Jyotirao Phule*, New Delhi, Left Word Books, 2004

¹⁷ V.Geetha and S.V.Rajadurai, *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium*, Calcutta, Samya, 1998; Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism*, Berkeley, California University press, 1969

¹⁸ M.G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power and Gleanings from Maratha Chronicles*, Bombay, University of Bombay, 1961

their self-identity on Koran and the Sunnah, the Deobandhi and the Bareilvi Madrasas¹⁹ tried to interpret the significance of tradition and their belonging to a non-Islamic setting very differently. The creation of Pakistan did not resolve this issue. The wrestling of Muslims to negotiate their way in Indian democracy, has thrown up a huge body of institutions. There have been the other minorities marking their presence in their distinctive ways. There are nearly 200 denominations among the 2.2 per cent Christians in India, and there are over 400 tribal communities. The population of Buddhists, mainly converts from Dalit communities, is growing in India. These different kinds of differences drawn into the political arena seek all kinds of instrumentalities to make their presence felt.

Several other factors are noteworthy in this context: gender, language and region. Indian women made their assertive presence in the national movement. Many people think that the non-violent mass character of Indian national movement, helped in foisting such a presence. Women's movement in India has not merely argued for equal rights, but has remained as ardent against patriarchy as well. It has also increasingly recognized that difference and marginality should be an integral component of women's struggle. This has led to the creation of thousands of women's organizations all across India. The demand for linguistic states led to a direct confrontation with the fledgling independent Indian state, eventually making the latter to concede this demand. The language publics that jostle for attention in the Indian civil society need to be reckoned. Besides there are regional identities of various kinds, that keep propping up mustering some resources to back their claim. Some of them even describe themselves as nationalities. In some instances we may have to distinguish between associations founded on regional identity and those resting on nationalist claims, such as those in Northeast India.

This sphere also throws up internal contentions within castes and communities (for instance on customary law, or ijtehaad, or freedom of expression); there are linguistic minorities trying to protect themselves in places where they find themselves vis-à-vis the dominant languages of the regions they find themselves in; there are struggles of ethnic groups for autonomy, and occasionally such struggles can occupy the centre-stage of Indian politics as in the case of the Telangana movement²⁰ or struggles of mainland Adivasis/indigenous peoples in recent years. Even within hegemonic groups there are distinct factions and strata jostling for position. Let us call this complex melee of 'differences' as Civil Society Version 4.

From the 1970s onwards, particularly following the movement led by Jaya Prakash Narayan, a large number of groups have emerged in India that favour citizen activism, holding state agencies accountable for the consequences of public action, and uphold the rights of citizens vis-à-vis the state. Many of them are actively involved in concerns of social justice, environmental protection, capacity building, and even service and care. The registered NGOs themselves are supposed to exceed 2 million in India. Let us call them as Civil Society Version 5.

¹⁹ These two great schools of Islamic learning emerged in the later part of 19th century India, and continue to remain significant in shaping Muslim thinking in India.

²⁰ The Telangana movement eventually led to the carving out the 29th state by that name.

All of this makes Indian public domain jostle with a thick web of associations, striving to define public policy. Their number has grown enormously over the years, making civil society, sometimes, to sound as a cacophony of voices rather than an arena of contestation.

Mark Robinson speaks of three contentions that preeminently shape Indian civil society²¹:

1. Majoritarian Hindu nationalism versus secular nationalism
2. Contestations around liberalization and the market
3. Contestation with regard to the domain of State versus citizen rights.

He mentions other sites of contestation, particularly ‘struggles over the assertion of patriarchal values and violence against women, and struggles over caste dominance and social practices’. But, he thinks, they are either localized or fall within the ambit of the three contestations mentioned above. While I agree with Robinson that the three-fold contestations are quite central to the making of civil society in India, they need not be seen as exhausting the factors that drive the Indian civil society.

2.4 Political Parties and Regionalisation of the Indian Polity

India was a one-party dominant system till late 1980s, the Indian National Congress holding such a role for long. The first break came in late 1970s when several disparate parties joined hands and formed the Janata Party to fight the emergency rule (1975-1977). This party won the elections following the withdrawal of emergency, although once it was in power the different factions that constituted it started acting as independent parties. Soon it gave in to Congress rule again. Several Political Parties underwent a metamorphosis in late 1980s and early 1990s. While some of them retained their ideologically hallowed nomenclature their social base came to be relocated to reach out to a caste, caste-bloc or community. A number of political parties arose or stabilised in the 1990s. They included the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Samajwadi Party (SP), Biju Janata Dal (BJD), All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), Janata Dal (Secular) (JD-S), Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Manumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), Lok Janshakti Party (LJSP), All India Majilis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) etc. Most of them were primarily anchored to a caste, caste-bloc, community or region.

The ‘regionalization’ of the polity in 1990s was manifest in other ways as well. Regional parties became not merely additive units to coalition politics, but they contributed enormously to the importance a leading party wielded after the elections. The success of a coalition and eventually the popular backing it commanded largely depended upon the network of alliances that it forged.

²¹ Mark Robinson, “Civil Society and Ideological Contestation in India”, in Carolyn M. Elliott, *Civil Society: A Reader*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, pp. 357-376

The party-system in India in 1990s onwards can be described as follows:

1. There are sub-regional and ethnic parties primarily confined to a region, caste or community such as the PMK with its base amongst the Vanniyars in Tamil Nadu; Kerala Congress with its base among Syrian Christians in Kerala, the Apna Dal in Eastern Uttar Pradesh with its base among Patels and the Bharatiya Lok Dal with its base amongst the Jats in Western Uttar Pradesh. While they are confined to a region they cannot win an election on their own in their respective states. However, they have the capacity to shift a decisive proportion of votes to make a party win an election.
2. Parties which have confined themselves to their respective states such as Telugu Desam (TDP) in Andhra Pradesh, The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in Assam, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Orissa, the National Conference (NC) in Jammu and Kashmir, the Naga People's Front (NPF), and the Haryana Vikas Party (HVP).
3. Parties that do not necessarily confine themselves to a region but have hardly made attempts, or been little successful, to go beyond the state of their initial mooring such as the Trinamool Congress, the Shiromani Akali Dal, and Shiv Sena.
4. Parties which are primarily anchored in certain regions but strive to spread to other regions such as Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the Samajwadi Party (SP), the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), the Lok Jan Shakti Party (LJSP), Janata Dal Secular (JDS), Janata Dal United (JDU) etc. All of them have a strong base in an ethnic group, caste, or caste-community alliance but are not wholly confined to them. Many commentators would place the Left parties too within this typology.
5. Parties which are caught in linguistic and ethnic identity and are co-extensive with the identities they are anchored in such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK).
6. Parties, which have a presence in all or most of the regions of India, and diverse social constituencies. At present there are only two parties of this kind, the Congress and the BJP, and to an extent the two Communist Parties of India and the All India Muslim League. The social bases of support of the Congress have highly eroded, and in several states it is ethnicized, in terms of support in a cluster of castes and communities. The BJP, as I have pointed out earlier, is strongly tilted in favour of Hindu nationalism. Table 7, provides an account of the tilt towards, regional and ethnic parties from 1996-2014.

Tab. 7: Percentage of Votes secured by National and State Parties in the Lok Sabha 1996-2014

Parties	1996	1998	1999	2004	2009	2014
Congress	25.8	26.0	21.0	26.53	28.6	19.30
BJP	29.6	33.5	33.5	21.16	18.8	31.00
Sub Total	55.4	59.5	54.5	47.69	47.4	49.30
Other National Parties*	18.8	11.8	13.3	15.26	14.9	9.7
Sub Total	74.2	71.3	67.8	62.89	62.3	59
State Parties and Others	25.8	28.7	32.2	32.86	37.7	41
Total (N=543 seats)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100	100	100

* The criteria of national party have undergone changes over the years. In 2014, to be a national party, a party needed to fulfil at least one of the following requirement:

1. Has won 2% of seats in Lok Sabha at least from 3 different states
2. Has won 6% of votes in four states and in addition won 4 Lok Sabha seats
3. Got recognition as state party in four or more states. To be recognised as a state party a party needs to send 4% of the state's quota to Lok Sabha or 3.33% of members to the Legislative Assembly.

In 2014, prior to the elections, there were six national parties: Indian national Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, National Congress party, Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Source: Balveer Arora, "The Indian Parliament and Democracy", in Ajay K. Mehra and Gert W. Kuerk, eds., *The Indian Parliament: A Comparative Perspective*, New Delhi, Konark, 2003, P. 18-19; and for 2004, 2009 and 2014, *Statistical Reports of the General Elections*.

It did not take long for political parties in India that pre-poll coalition of political parties should be the rule of the game if they wish to capture power and run successful coalition governments. The BJP took a lead in this and combined itself with ethnic and regional parties, and reaped the bounty of what some people have called as the 'multiplier effect'.²² Many parties however, refused to join this coalition considering the BJP as the Hindu nationalist party and therefore exclusionary. The Congress played suit and threw up its own coalition. Several parties did not join this coalition, since they thought that the inclusive approach of the Congress, may lead to undercut their own base.

2. 5 In what way the 2014 Elections are Exceptional?

The General Elections 2014 will stand out for the following four reasons. In all these four respects the BJP as the leading party of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) stood out vis-à-vis its opponents:

1. It connected itself to sub-regional parties, who commanded a sizeable number of votes, and stuck a pre-poll alliance with them (See Table 8). It thereby made significant inroads in several states. It stuck a deal with sub-regional and primarily-regional parties, that were opposed to the Congress or the alliance that it led.

²² For the concept of 'multiplier effect', See, Yogendra Yadav, "The Elusive Mandate of 2004", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 51, December 18, 2004, pp. 5383-5398

Tab. 8: Social Bases and Vote Share of Political Parties

Categories	BJP	Congress	Left	Others	Change from 2009 (%)			
					BJP	Congress	Left	Others
All OBCs	34	15	3	49	+12	-9	-2	-1
Upper OBC	30	15	3	52	+8	-7	+1	-2
Lower OBC	42	16	3	39	+20	-11	-6	-3

Note: Figures are in per cent, rounded off and weighed by actual vote share of parties

Source: NES 2009, 2014, CSDS, Delhi

2. It reached out to social cleavages much more effectively than the Congress, and the other contenders at the hustling did. It elicited huge support from lower OBCs, non-Christian Tribal communities, apart from its traditional support base of upper castes, and economically better off segments. But it also made forays into certain Dalit castes, Muslim strata, the youth etc. Table 9, highlights the remarkable advance the BJP registered among the numerous OBC or Other Backward Classes category²³. As a result it undercut the vote base of regional parties with nationalist ambitions, and other national parties such as the Congress. This consolidation led to reinforcing Hindu identity as well. In other words, Civil Society Version 3 mentioned above, attempted to reach out to a section of Civil Society 4. It also dented a little Civil Society 1,²⁴ and showed favourable disposition to certain aspects of Civil Society 2²⁵.

On the other hand the Congress spoke of hold-all social categories such as Muslims, Dalits, Tribals etc., and regions such as the Northeast and Telangana, as issues of its special concern, while the BJP was undercutting these hold-all categories from beneath and enlisting the cooperation of significant sections of them. The ground-work done by the RSS proved enormously beneficial in this regard.²⁶

3. The BJP absorbed/reabsorbed within its fold certain opposition leaders who had a strong ethnic base in certain pockets, where it was itself weak. This was the case with certain Jat leaders in Western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, Yediyurappa the Lingayat leader in Karnataka etc. It struck a tactical truce with some leaders such as Raj Thackeray of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena, who did not put up candidates against the BJP in Maharashtra. It displayed

²³ The OBCs are aggregates of disparate castes, sub-castes and traditional occupational groups, below the upper castes but distinguishable from Dalits, the former untouchable castes. The estimate of the demographic strength of this group is disputed. The National Sample Survey (NSS), 2004-2005, estimates them as 41 per cent of the population of the country.

²⁴ The denting of Civil Society 1 can be seen in the employment of the language of development, national inclusion and modernity. In fact, Modi often drew parallels between the national movement, and the contemporary challenges facing India and the kind of commitment it called for.

²⁵ Modi constantly invoked the name of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (M. K. Gandhi), leader of India's freedom movement, in his speeches and exhortations.

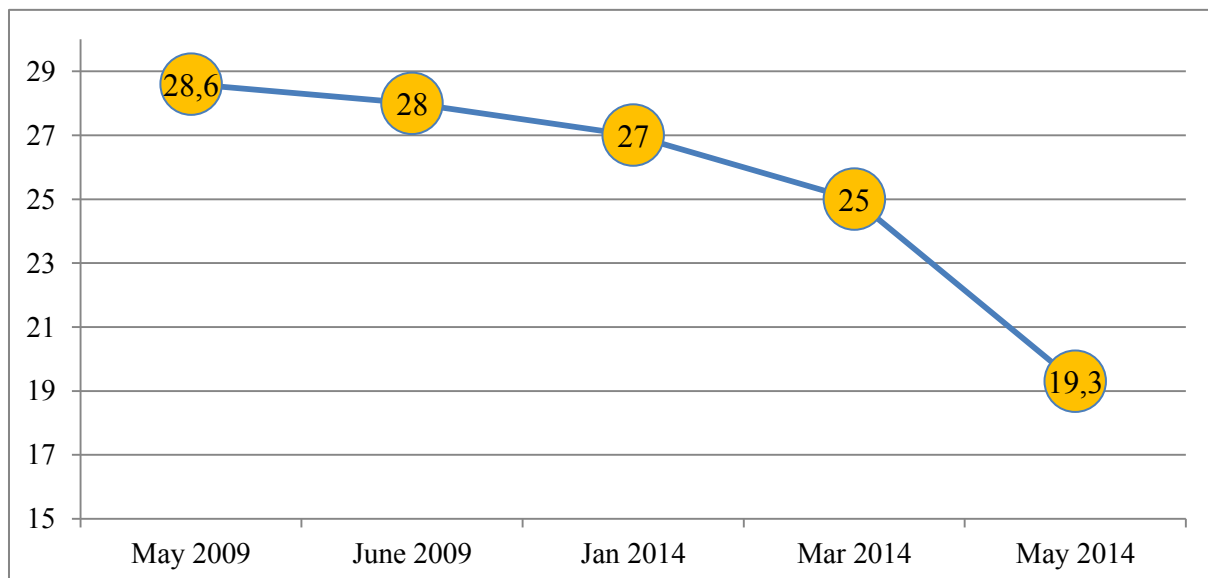
²⁶ For an account, See Badri Narayan, "Modi's Modus Operandi in the 2014 Elections", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLIX, No. 20, May 17, 2014, pp. 12-14

little sympathy towards those who may have been important leaders at a certain stage, but enjoyed little grass root support.

4. But no less significant was the strategy the BJP employed for the purpose (See Figure 4). In all the civil society domains that we have charted above, there was a critical element prepared to shift sides, although the extent of such disposition and the numbers were a matter of speculation. The reasons for such non-committal were not always economic, but identity, opposition to other local social groups, aspirations, disenchantment with the prevailing scheme of things etc. The BJP converted these critical elements into its supporters by adopting a complex strategy of marketing and packaging. It had a pool of highly trained professionals, particularly drawn from their RSS background for the purpose, huge support in the social media whose netizens generally hail from upper caste, professional, urban, and relatively affluent backgrounds, and a stronger presence in the electronic and print media. Narendra Modi, the prime ministerial candidate of the party addressed large audiences in simple but prosaic Hindi, drawing the line of demarcation between himself and the rest. The BJP also displayed strong organizational solidarity and support. Compared to it the Congress strategy appeared lackadaisical, and reactive.

Figure 4 demonstrates the frittering of support by the Congress within 4 months. With 27 per cent support in January, 2014, the Congress was a close contender to power. But in those four months it lost nearly 8 per cent of its vote share.

Fig. 4: The Down word Slide of Congress Vote



Source: Pradeep Chibber and Rahul Verma “A MANDATE FOR CHANGE :It is Modi, not BJP that won this Election”, The Hindu, June 1, 2014

2.6 Conclusion

The experiment that the BJP pursued in this election is of enormous consequence. It has tried to link civil society 3 and 4, and tried to encompass difference within the fold of Hindu

nationalism. It has not merely undercut the opposition coalition, but the social bases of support of several parties that emerged to significance in 1990s. Often people speak of aspirations that have brought this coalition together, and its potential to destabilize the government if they are not met. But the factor of aspiration may jostle the government a little, but aspirations themselves do not constitute the reasons for this government. In this context, if the opposition has to recover itself, it has to re-imagine its base in civil society, and forge new alliances. Such an endeavour demands much more than waiting for the 'D' day.

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Appendix

Tab. 9: State Governments and their Ruling Parties

S. No.	Name of the State/ Union Territory	Ruling Party, Coalition	Number of Seats in the Assembly
01	Arunachal Pradesh	INC	60
02	Assam	INC	126
03	Bihar	JD(U)	243(+75)
04	Chattisgarh	BJP	91
05	Goa	BJP	40
06	Gujarat	BJP	182
07	Haryana	INC	90
08	Himachal Pradesh	INC	68
09	Jammu and Kashmir	NC+ INC	89(+36)
10	Jharkhand	JMM+INC+RJD	81
11	Karnataka	INC	224(+75)
12	Kerala	UDF (Lead INC)	141
13	Madhya Pradesh	BJP	231
14	Maharastra	INC+NCP	289(+78)
15	Manipur	INC	60
16	Meghalaya	INC led United Alliance	60
17	Mizoram	INC	40
18	Nagaland	Naga people's Front	60
19	Orissa	BJD	147
20	Punjab	SAD+BJP	117
21	Rajasthan	BJP	200
22	Seemandhra	TDP	175 (+ 50)
23	Sikkim	Sikkim Democratic Front	32
24	Tamil Nadu	AIDMK	234
25	Telangana	TRS	119(+40)
26	Tripura	CPI(M)	60
27	Uttarakhand	INC	70
28	Uttar Pradesh	SP	404 (+108)
29	West Bengal	AITC	295
01	Delhi	President's Rule	70
02	Pondicherry	All India N.R. Congress in Alliance with AIDMK	30