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## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/13295

DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/13295>



### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### COMMUNAL REALIGNMENT AND SUPPORT FOR THE BJP-GENERAL ELECT ION 2019

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#### Manuscript Info

##### Manuscript History

Received: 15 June 2021

Final Accepted: 19 July 2021

Published: August 2021

##### Key words:-

Bhartiya Janata Party, Ethnic And Regional, Electoral Pattern ,Hindutva

#### Abstract

From 2009 to 2019, the story of Bhartiya Janata Party(ruling party) has been one of an amazing transformation .In 2014, election was fought on the grounds of economic development and not on ethnic or regional lines. But in 2019 Bhartiya Janta Party had landslide victory under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi,bringing a dramatic shift in the nature and manner of Indian electoral politics . The voting pattern during the election of 2019 witnessed a strong sense of nationalism, the need to have a strong stable government and the belief that only Narendra Modi could wear Hindutva on his sleeves

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#### Introduction:-

From 2009 to 2019, the story of Bhartiya Janta Party has been one of an amazing transformation and rise to power since its 2009 debacle. In 2009 for the first time since 1984, the anti-incumbency factor did not work and the Congress came back to power with a majority in the Parliament and the BJP was reduced to a dismal 116 seats, its worst showing ever. But the resilient Bhartiya Janta Party had learnt a strong lesson and the party learning from its mistakes consolidated itself to come back to power in 2014 elections with the help of the regional parties and its allies who stood together to present a united clean front against the Congress party which had been riddled with corruption controversies. It was for the first time that an election was fought largely on the grounds of economic development and not ethnic or regional lines. But the 2019 election and the unprecedented landslide victory that the Bhartiya Janta Party pulled under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was a dramatic shift in the nature of Indian politics and the manner in which elections will be held in the future. The voting pattern during the election of 2019 was based on a strong sense of nationalism, the need to have a strong stable government at the centre and most importantly, the belief that only Narendra Modi who wore his Hindutva on his sleeve could push the de facto Hindu majoritarian nation into a Hindu de jure majoritarian nation. One witnessed a realignment of communalism during the 2019 elections when the voting pattern was not guided by caste or regionalism but more by the religion and nationalism.

One major factor that is widely accepted to have contributed to the victory of BJP has been national and religious polarisation. An analysis of the voting pattern in the 2019 election reflects a massive consolidation of votes on religious lines with the majority of Hindu votes going to the BJP and the main religious minorities largely staying away from BJP and its allies. In the 2014 and 2019 election a shift in the voting pattern has been visible with the voters choosing to elect not on the caste line but more on the religion lines and the duo of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah have successfully created a category of voters- Hindu voters and a sense of Hindu nationalism which played a major role in the landslide victory of BJP in 2019.

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<sup>1</sup>During the 2014 elections, the BJP under the leadership of Modi, unlike as in 1992, underplayed the religious and Hindutva card and spoke only of *vikas* on their campaign trail. In the background of an economy which was reeling under a spate of corruption charges being faced by the Congress government, BJP and Modi spoke of *vikas* through an ambitious plan for the nation's economic development. The party promised recovery of black money, creating smart cities, modern infrastructure, encouraging investment in India for manufacturing, and skill development for Indian workers all of which would have created crores of jobs. In the absence of any leader in the opposition and tired of the Congress corruption, even the liberals in India went with the development promise and chose to ignore the role of Modi in 2002 riots. Instead they chose to look at the development model in Gujarat and hoped to see that replicated for the country. During this tenure while the BJP government introduced several development plans along with several very populist initiatives as Swacch Bharat Abhiyan, building toilets, Ujjwala plan, all of which touched the lives of the common man, but development of the economy eluded the BJP. Defective economic policies coupled with the drastic effects of demonetisation and GST led to the worst ever economic crisis for India and his promise of *Vikas* went for a toss. Despite all this BJP came back to power in 2019 with a thumping majority and major factor contributing to this victory was the rise of the Hindu nationalism.

During the 5 years from 2014 to 2019, while BJP had fought on the platform of development they had very subtly delivered Hindutva with several RSS leaders being appointed to lead ministries and key institutions, stoking the Hindu nationalist sentiments through rewriting the school text books and history books to keep put the names of role of Muslim rulers, changing the official names of places from Muslim names to Hindu names, aggressively contesting the holy sites, trying to find a mystical river that was featured in Hindu religious literature, save the cow slogan, media attacks on Pakistan and stirring up religious sentiments of the people.

In 2019 elections, Modi wore Hindutva on his sleeves when he gave tickets to several noted RSS leaders and candidates as Pragya Thakur who called Godse a patriot and openly swears allegiance to outfits that stand for India being declared a Hindu Rashtra . Even in a state like West Bengal which treated itself as separate from North India , Ram Navmi processions were carried out by the BJP and no one could stop it because they had the freedom to hold religious rallies and if anyone opposed it they would be considered as being against the Hindus and would lose votes.

Even the NRC and CAB was argued on the grounds that immigrant Hindus should be protected in India as they had been prosecuted by the Muslim majority and if Hindus migrated to India they should be given citizenship. The argument for immigrants was now not on economic grounds but on religious grounds. It was based on the Two Nation theory which says that fundamentally in the subcontinent India belongs to Hindus and Muslims are in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Another major shift that happened during these five years was the shift from cast based identity to religion based identity of the voters. During my research I talked to several respondents from the lower caste and the response was the same across... they were proud Hindus and would vote for Modi for he would deliver the lost status and respect of the Hindus , build the Ram Mandir and abolish article 360 thus showing that we were a Hindu Rashtra. Another very disturbing trend that I came across during my research was the open hatred against the Muslim and an agreement that the country had done enough of appeasement policy for the religious minorities.

During the 2019 elections people cited several reasons for voting for Modi and BJP as vikas, need to give him another chance, no other alternative, non-corrupt leader, someone who could take a stand against Pakistan during the Pulwama attack, but if probed a little deeper, most of the respondents agreed that they had voted for Hindutva and for rebuilding their lost glory. The actual economic performance of BJP became irrelevant and Hindu pride and nationalism became the dominant factors during the 2019 election.

Several statements and actions of the BJP leaders during their election campaign also clearly defined that the election was fought on the platform of Hindutva. In small towns and villages, the BJP karyakarta were openly invoking people to vote for Hindutva.

Provocative language with religious overtones were used by several top BJP leaders during the election campaign. The BJP party president at a rally in West Bengal called the illegal immigrants "termites" while Narendra Modi himself at a rally in Wardha said he would teach the Congress party a lesson for coining the term "Hindu terror". He even raised the issue of Rahul Gandhi contesting from Wayanad which had substantial voters from minority

community. He remarked “Hindu community is aware now. It is evident from the fact that one has to contest a seat where the minority is majority”.<sup>1</sup>

General Election 2019 was a combination of nationalism and development .A combination of nationalist rhetoric, subtle religious polarisation and a slew of welfare programmes helped Mr Modi to coast to a second successive win Before the election 2019 ,Prime Minister Modi ,put his best efforts to win the confidence of people of India especially the Hindus for restoring the respect and pride of India(Hindus). His “**Ekant Sadhna**” at **Kedarnath** was highlighted and glorified by media to justify his action of protecting Hinduism,that sent sparkling light in the minds of Hindus-IT is possible only when Modi is there

Many programs of the BJP under the leadership of Narendra Modi as Ujjwala, Swachhbharat mission and motivating to make toilets in every household programs impacted the common man that got converted into votes in many north Indian states,but other states also witnessed religious polarisation with lynching's and hate crimes going unpunished. These dimensions invoked Hindu pride but also isolated the minorities ,that can be witnessed that India having population of 190 million ,there are only 26 Muslims representation .The defining idea of Narendra Modi's landslide 2019 victory is Hindutva, the ideology that defines Indian culture in terms of Hindu values.<sup>2</sup>

It has been observed by the political scientists that BJP under leadership of Mr Modi had fused nationalism with development. The party organisation had created binaries: the Nationalists (his supporters) versus the Anti-nationals (his political rivals and critics); the Watchman (Modi and his supporters , protecting the country on "land, air, and outer space") versus the entitled and the Corrupt -an obvious dig at the main opposition Congress party and its leaders.

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