



A critical analysis of Bhartiya Janata Party in context of political governance of India

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Abstract: The Bhartiya Janata party is the richest, largest, and most dominant political party in India. This expansion was made possible by the foundations that were laid following the party's first electoral defeat in the 1984 general polls. The party then decided to abandon the ideals of "positive secularism and Gandhian socialism" that it had adopted in its inception in 1980, under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee who would later serve as prime minister. In the late 1980s and the 1990s, the Bhartiya Janata party went back to the Hindutva ideology of its precursor, the Bhartiya Jan Sangh (BJS). The objectives of the study are to explore the rise of Bhartiya Janata Party since 2014. In the same context, the aim behind this study is to explore the Hindu nationalism and national integration as adopted by Bhartiya Janata Party. Apart from this existing study aims to explore the ideological hegemony propagated by Bhartiya Janata Party in contemporary era. Keeping the nature of the study under consideration, the descriptive method will be used by the researcher for the present study.

Keywords: *Bhartiya Janata Party, Hindutva, political governance*

1.1: Introduction: In nine years since 2013, when Narendra Modi was declared its prime ministerial candidate, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has managed to widen its geographical reach and strengthen its electoral and political supremacy across the country. Today, the Bhartiya Janata party is the richest, largest, and most dominant political party in India. This expansion was made possible by the foundations that were laid following the party's first electoral defeat in the 1984 general polls. The party then decided to abandon the ideals of "positive secularism and Gandhian socialism" that it had adopted in its inception in 1980, under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee who would later serve as prime minister. In the late 1980s and the 1990s, the Bhartiya Janata party went back to the Hindutva ideology of its precursor, the Bhartiya Jan Sangh (BJS). In the 1984 elections, the Bhartiya Janata party won only two Lok Sabha seats, provoking serious introspection within the party and its ideological parent, the Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The electoral failure was seen as proof that the moderate policy of Vajpayee would not work. Vajpayee was replaced as Bhartiya Janata party president by Lal Krishna Advani, who promptly revived the BJS's hard-line Hindutva as the core ideology of the party. Advani used the Hindutva rhetoric of "pseudo secularism" and "Muslim appeasement" to great effect in winning popular support among the Hindus, aided by the soft-Hindutva politics the Indian National Congress played then. The next logical step was to join the RSS-backed Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) which was leading the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Soon, Advani became the face of a country-wide campaign to build a Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Aajodhya where the Babri masjid once stood (Eswaran, S. (2014)). The hard-line Hindutva politics paid rich electoral dividends in the next general elections in 1989 when the Bhartiya Janata party won 85 Lok Sabha seats. In the 1991 general elections, it increased its strength to 120 and its vote share went up to 20.1 percent from 11.4 percent in 1989 and 7.4 percent in 1984. In the 1996 general elections, the Bhartiya Janata party's seats in Lok Sabha went up to 161 and it staked claim to form the government as the single largest party, which was accepted. Thus, the first ever Bhartiya Janata party -led government was formed under the leadership of

Vajpayee but it lasted for only 13 days as it failed to garner the support of other non-Congress, non-Left political parties to muster a majority. Vajpayee resigned, rather than face a vote of confidence in Parliament. In the next general polls in 1998, the Bhartiya Janata Party obtained 182 seats in the Lok Sabha and formed a coalition government called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which lasted 13 months from 19 March 1998 to 17 April 1999 when it lost a no-confidence motion by a single vote. Thereafter, in September-October 1999, the Bhartiya Janata Party -led NDA won 270 seats in the general elections, with the Bhartiya Janata Party once again getting 182 seats. Vajpayee became prime minister for the third time and his government lasted the full term until the next general polls in 2004. The Bhartiya Janata Party's rise to power can be attributed partly to Advani's organisational skills, as well as the party's return to the Hindutva agenda while keeping the liberal image of Vajpayee alive in popular memory. What further helped the party was the fact that the electorate wanted a change from the long years of Congress rule. Slogans like "Party with a difference" and an appeal to the electorate to give the Bhartiya Janata Party a chance captured the confidence of the electorate. A little over six years of the Vajpayee government, between 1998 and 2004, established the party as a credible alternative to the Congress. However, the Bhartiya Janata Party-led NDA lost the next two general elections due to various factors, making way for a Congress-led coalition, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), to run the government until a series of scams, high inflation and unemployment and policy paralysis grounded it in the 2014 elections. This time, the Bhartiya Janata Party was led by Modi, a four-time chief minister of Gujarat and the party's prime ministerial candidate. He managed to capitalise on the popular discontent against the UPA government and won the party a majority, on its own, in Lok Sabha. The last time a party had won a majority on its own was when the Congress won 404 seats in the 1984 elections that followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Ever since Modi became prime minister on 26 May 2014, the Bhartiya Janata Party has been working like a well-oiled electoral machine. It has won one state election after another and is dominating the national discourse like no other party has done in recent memory.

1.2: STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM: The statement of research problem is as under:

“A critical analysis of Bhartiya Janata Party in context of political governance of India”

1.3: OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY: The objectives of the study are as under:

- 1) To explore the rise of Bhartiya Janata Party since 2014
- 2) To explore the nationalism and Hindutva as adopted by Bhartiya Janata Party.
- 3) To explore the ideological hegemony propagated by Bhartiya Janata Party in contemporary era.
- 4) To explore the nationalism and Hindutva as adopted by Bhartiya Janata Party.

1.4: METHODOLOGY: The methodology of the present study has been stated in the following heads-

- ❖ **Method of the study:** Keeping the nature of the study under consideration, the descriptive method will be used by the researcher for the present study.
- ❖ **Collection of data:** The researcher in this study has collected both primary and secondary data.
- ❖ **Analysis and interpretation of the result:** The data has been analysed with the help of descriptive and comparative analysis. The detailed analysis and interpretation are reported as under:

Table 1.1: Bhartiya Janata Party's performance in 2014 elections.

States	Total states	Seats Won by BJP	Poll %
Andhra Pradesh	42	3	8.52
Arunachal Pradesh	2	1	46.62
Assam	14	7	36.86
Bihar	40	22	29.86
Goa	2	2	54.12
Gujarat	26	26	60.11
Haryana	10	7	34.84

Himachal Pradesh	4	4	53.85
Jammu and Kashmir	6	3	32.65
Karnataka	28	17	43.37
Kerala	20	0	10.45
Madhya Pradesh	29	27	54.76
Maharashtra	48	23	27.56
Manipur	2	0	11.98
Meghalaya	2	0	9.16
Mizoram	1	0	0.00
Nagaland	1	0	0.00
Odisha	21	1	21.88
Punjab	13	2	8.77
Rajasthan	25	25	55.61
Sikkim	1	0	2.39
Tamil nadu	39	1	5.56
Tripura	2	0	5.77
Uttar Pradesh	80	71	42.63
West Bengal	42	2	17.02
Chhattisgarh	11	10	24.83
Jharkhand	14	12	40.71
Uttarakhand	5	5	55.93
Andaman & Nikobar island	1	1	48.19
Chandigarh	1	1	42.49
Dadar & nagir haveli	1	1	49.77
Daman & Diu	1	1	54.66
NCT od Delhi	7	7	46.63
Lakshadweep	1	0	0.43
Puducherry	1	0	0.00
Total	543	282	31.3

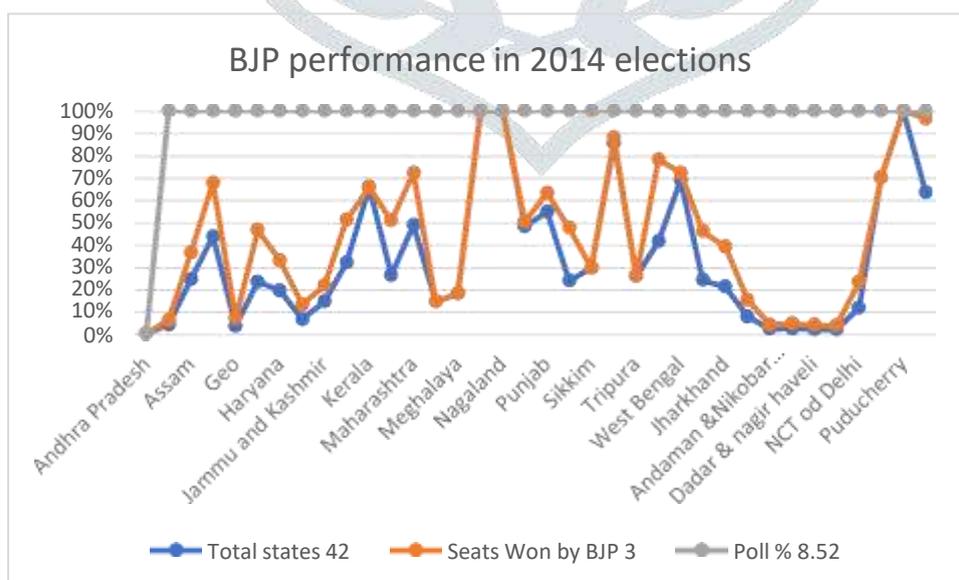


Fig. 1.1 Showing the Bhartiya Janata Party performance in parliament election 2014.

The batteded results indicate that In Andhra Pradesh Bhartiya Janata party won 3 seats out of 42, in Arunachal Pradesh Bhartiya Janata party won 1seat out of 2, in Assam Bhartiya Janta part won 7seats out of 14,in Bihar Bhartiya Janata Party won 22seats Out of 40,in Geo BhartiyaJanata Party won2 out of in Gujarat

Bhartiya Janata Party won 26 seats out of 26, In Haryana Bhartiya Janata Party won 7 seats out of 10, In Himachal Pradesh Bhartiya Janata Party won 4 seats out of 4, In Jammu and Kashmir Bhartiya Janata Party won 3 seats out of 6, In Karnataka Bhartiya Janata Party won 17 seats out of 28, In Kerala Bhartiya Janata Party had won no seat out of 20, In Madhya Pradesh Bhartiya Janata Party won 27 seats out of 29, In Maharashtra Bhartiya Janata Party won 23 seats out of 48, In Manipur Bhartiya Janata Party had won no seat out of 2, In Meghalaya Bhartiya Janata Party have won no seat out of 2 and in Mizoram Bhartiya Janata Party won 0 seats out of 2.

Indeed, Bhartiya Janata Party have won has achieved a historical position in 2014 election by giving a setback to long time ruling part INC. However, in their period of political government they have laded focuses on multiple hegemonic issued by degrading the worth of secularism in worlds largest democracy. Accordingly, the research will focus on belowmentioned key elements:

- ❖ **Ideological hegemony:** Ideological hegemony: In an incisive 2018 essay, Suhas Palshikar characterized the Bhartiya Janata Party under Modi as a classic example of a hegemonic political party Palshikar defined hegemony as having two components: ideology and electoral performance. The Bhartiya Janata Party's hold on Indian voters has been well documented. Equally interesting is how the party has managed to exert its dominance ideologically. According to Palshikar's account, the Bhartiya Janata Party's twin emphasis on Hindu nationalism and what he calls a 'new developmentalism', has allowed the party to saturate the political space in India. This has been made possible, in part, by the fact that the Congress Party's legacy of secular nationalism appears to have fallen out of favour. The Bhartiya Janata Party's brand of Hindu nationalism has allowed it to broaden its demographic base beyond a small sliver of Hindu upper castes and trading communities to include Dalits, OBCs, and Adivasis by using memes such as Ram Mandir, cow protection, and illegal immigration to transcend caste divisions among Hindus. But it is important to note that the Bhartiya Janata Party under Modi has expanded its nationalist discourse beyond Hindutva to accommodate other formulations. For instance, in recent years it has made use of a more amorphous nationalism centred on territorial sovereignty, loyalty to the nation, and resentment towards traditional liberal elites who it painted as out-of-touch, feckless, and compromised by divided loyalties. It has also skilfully used foreign policy, like the brief 2019 skirmish with Pakistan in the wake of the Pulwama terrorist attack, to brandish a muscularity abroad and a reclaiming of India's rightful place in the world. For the first time in recent memory, voters on the campaign trail routinely told reporters that this election was more than a battle between partisan contenders, it was a battle *desh ke liye* (for the nation). Aside from nationalism, the Bhartiya Janata Party has also managed to dominate the discourse on the economy and economic development. The prime minister has cultivated a persona as a pro-business, anti-corruption reformer, contrasting his tenure with the Congress' legacy of policy paralysis, cronyism, and burdensome regulation between 2009 and 2014. Even though Modi's demonetization gambit largely failed to meet its stated objectives, it bolstered the prime minister's image as a decisive leader willing to tackle corruption head on. Now, the prime minister has also refashioned his own image as the architect of India's modern welfare state. Between 2014 and 2019, the Modi government amassed a creditable record building assets from roads to toilets to cooking gas connections, especially in rural areas. Additionally, by appropriating and rebranding many schemes initially set up by the Congress, Modi has left the party effectively unable to criticize his actions. Organizational and financial prowess: The ability of the Bhartiya Janata Party to project Modi as a leader with unimpeachable credentials, to deliver its nuanced messages of nationalism to different target audiences, and to parry the opposition's jibes rests on a political machine that is miles ahead of the competition in terms of its organizational foundations and material resources. Under the

tutelage of Bhartiya Janata Party President Amit Shah, the party has built a well-oiled party machine that is organized down to the level of the panna pramukh – literally a party worker who is in charge of an individual panna (page) of the voter roll linked to a neighbourhood polling station. Furthermore, the Bhartiya Janata Party has successfully harnessed digital technology from Facebook to SMS to WhatsApp to build cohesion among its workers and voters. The Bhartiya Janata Party's organization in West Bengal created and monitored 55,000 WhatsApp groups to win over voters, and the Bengal Bhartiya Janata Party Facebook and Twitter accounts received 220 million engagements and four million impressions, respectively, in the two months leading up to the election. Even more striking is the Bhartiya Janata Party's financial advantage. Based on parties' income tax returns from fiscal year 2018, the Congress raised around Rs 200 crore in donations, compared to a whopping Rs 1,000 crore for the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party. The Bhartiya Janata Party advantage over the Congress when it comes to corporate funding (that is formally disclosed) stood at 20 to 1 in 2018. A report issued by the Centre for Media Studies (CMS) estimates that total election expenditures doubled from 2014 to 2019, with the Bhartiya Janata Party accounting for around 45% of all election spending. Charismatic leadership: Finally, in both 2014 and 2019, one could say that these were Modi's victories more than the Bhartiya Janta parties. According to the 2019 National Election Study, Modi's net favourability (a measure of his popularity relative to that of Congress President Rahul Gandhi) was roughly at the same level it was in April-May 2014 – an eighteen-percentage point advantage. In essence, a central component of what people are voting for is Modi's leadership. Modi's favourability has to be seen in the context of a general dearth of popular, charismatic leaders among opposition forces. Despite the fact that Rahul Gandhi had become more popular, more effective, more diligent, and more present, only a small minority of Indians trusts him with the reins of the country. Even though voters voiced many economic grievances related to the Bhartiya Janata Party's five years in power, at the same time they viewed Modi as the one national leader best placed to address those grievances. With the 2019 general election concluded, it is now clear that India has indeed embarked on a new chapter in its political evolution. Gone are the days of Congress dominance, as the Bhartiya Janata Party has overtaken India's Grand Old Party to preside over a 'second dominant party' system. To be clear, the emergence of a new party system says nothing about the endurance of that electoral order. While India's previous three systems each had a degree of staying power, the fate of the fourth party system will eventually hinge on the precise dynamics of India's party politics and the vagaries or voter behaviour. In addition, the transition from one system to the next can usually only be discerned with the benefit of hindsight. The Bhartiya Janata Party's emergence as a hegemonic force does not mean that the party is somehow inoculated from electoral setbacks. Indeed, between 2014 and 2019, the Bhartiya Janata Party lost critical state elections in Delhi and Bihar in 2015 and in three North Indian states in December 2018 held on the eve of the general election. In fact, it is worth pointing out that the Bhartiya Janata Party has not won a single state election in calendar years 2018 and 2019 (to date). But the larger point is not about individual wins and losses as it is that the Bhartiya Janata Party has emerged as a system-defining party, a political formation in reference to which all others position themselves.

- ❖ **Hindu nationalism and national integration:** The Bhartiya Janata Party emphasize Hindu nationalism and national integration. It believes that Indians are living in an era of nation states and welfare of the people, largely depends on national efforts. India is one nation and Indians are one people, constituting and mutually accommodating plurality of religions, faiths, ideologies, languages and interests. People of different faiths and different ideologies should be able to co-exist in peace. Ideology of Bhartiya Janata Party and harmony with one another. National consensus is possible

when the development of one social group leads to the development of other social groups. Those who have external or extra territorial loyalties or are engaged in anti-social activities cannot be expected to contribute to national consensus and, therefore, will have to be kept out. The party is pledged to build up India a strong and prosperous nation, which is modern, progressive and enlightened in outlook proudly drawing inspiration from India's ancient culture and values and playing an important role in the comity of nations for the establishment of peace and a just international order. Many Hindu nationalists argue that the partition of India on the basis of religion and the creation of the Muslim majority Pakistan was itself a testimony to the failure of Nehruvian ideology of Indian nationalism. They believe that if Muslim nationalism was the cause for the creation of Pakistan, logically Hindu nationalism should have been dominant in the Indian state. They also reject the ideology that India has a composite or synthetic culture. They hold that Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh cultures are the sub-cultures of Hinduism because they were born out of Hinduism and they are a part of Bhartiya Culture. The Bhartiya Janata Party continues to adhere to a specific ideology of Hindu Nationalism, which has a long genealogy in the Indian context dating back to the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Suhas Palshikar argues, "Religio-cultural homogenization and the search for Hindu cultural hegemony are key defining features of the politics of Hindutva. This political project claims that India's nationhood is based on Hindu cultural-religious traditions, that Indian culture is primarily Hindu culture, that Hindu religion and culture are superior. This "Hindu nationalist" position is suspicious of the non-Hindu communities and manifests an express animosity towards Muslims. Given the nature of this ideological position, the prospect of the Bhartiya Janata Party becoming "centrist" appears curious because it would involve toning down many of these claims and, above all, it would mean giving up on homogenization-hegemony project. As stated earlier, the Bhartiya Janata Party is committed to the concept of one nation, one people and one culture. The nationalist vision of the party is not merely bound by the geographical political identity of Bharat but it is referred to by India's timeless cultural heritage. This cultural heritage which is central to all regions, religions and languages, is a civilizational identity and constitutes the cultural nationalism of India which is the core of Hindutva (Eswaran, S. 2014). The Bhartiya Janata Party held the view that every effort to characterize Hindutva as a sectarian or exclusive idea had failed as the people of India had repeatedly rejected such a view and the Supreme Court too, finally endorsed the true meaning and content of Hindutva as being consistent with the true meaning and definition of secularism. In fact, Hindutva accepts as sacred all forms of belief and worship. The party is convinced that Hindutva has immense potentiality to re-energize this nation and strengthen and discipline it to undertake the arduous task of nation-building. This can and does trigger a higher level of patriotism that can transform the country to greater levels of efficiency and performance. After 1984, the Bhartiya Janata Party revived the strategy of militant Hindu nationalism which enabled it to muster the support of the RSS. The party has rejected Savarkar's version of Hindutva which emphasized territorial and cultural nationalism, and was comparatively broad based. Now it has adopted Golwalkar's ideology of Hindutva which rejected the theories of territorial nationalism. The Bhartiya Janata Party also favoured the Golwalkar's concept of Hinduism in which he said that the minorities would have to become Hindus not by choice but against their will, or else they would have to face violence and threat from the Hindus. This concept, according to which Hindutva emphasizes the creation of Hindu empire by conquest and by engaging in the task of temple rescuing activities, was readily accepted and upheld more prominently by the RSS and VHP and to a lesser extent by the Bhartiya Janata Party. According to the

Bhartiya Janata Party, nationalism is rooted in the acceptance of Hinduism as a religious identity, and India's national identity has its roots in Hindu culture and should incorporate the traditions, values, practices and beliefs of Hindu heritage, as the Hindus constitute majority.

1.4: Conclusion: There is hardly any doubt that the Bhartiya Janata Party has transformed itself in a period of nine years, evolving into an almost unrecognisable political machine. The party's rapid expansion, resulting in its current pan-India presence has also brought in a new set of challenges for world's largest democracy. A possible electoral defeat at the national level can trigger questions about the present model that has helped the party to come to power at the Centre and in 20 states. Similarly, the efficacy of the strategy to expand the party's support base among non-Jatav Dalits, non-Yadav backwards castes, tribal communities and other social groups may be questioned in case of a reversal of the party's electoral fortunes. The Bhartiya Janata Party also favoured the Golwalkar's concept of Hinduism in which he said that the minorities would have to become Hindus not by choice but against their will, or else they would have to face violence and threat from the Hindus. This concept, according to which Hindutva emphasizes the creation of Hindu empire by conquest and by engaging in the task of temple rescuing activities, was readily accepted and upheld more prominently by the RSS and VHP and to a lesser extent by the Bhartiya Janata Party.

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