



Rise and growth of the Bharatiya Janata Party

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Abstract

The present study has been carried out with broad discussion about the modern incarnation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) in the new name the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as a new party. The study has highlighted in detail about the rise and growth of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Keywords: bharatiya jana sangh (BJS), bharatiya janata party (BJP)

Introduction

The BJP was inaugurated as a new political party on April 5, 1980 by the persons who were associated with the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was given the responsibility to lead the party. The members of the party regarded it as Janata Party's heir. The objective was to widen the electoral base of the party. In this spirit, the party not only welcomed many Janata Party leaders but also gave them important positions. Importantly, these leaders had no previous association with the Hindu nationalism. Some of them were: Ram Jethmalani, Shanti Bhushan and Sikander Bakht. Even a former Supreme Court Judge, K.S. Hegde (also speaker of Lok Sabha from 1977-1979) was appointed as vice-president of the party in place of L.K. Advani. The party president, Atal Bihari Vajpayee justified the break with the Jana Sangh's legacy at the first national convention of the party. He quoted two points. "First, almost 2.5 million members, many of whom had never associated with the Jana Sangh, had joined the BJP in its first nine months. Second, the legacy of J.P. Narayan's Gandhian "value-based politics" had far from exhausted its potential as a mass-mobilizing device" (Hansen, T. B., 1999) [6]. The party sought to include policies and programmes advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, Jayprakash Narayan and Deendayal Upadhyaya to rebuild the Indian society as well as polity.

In order to give the party an all India configuration it was proposed to follow the principles of nationalism and national integration, commitment to democracy, Gandhian Socialism, positive secularism, i.e. '*Sarva Dharma Samabhav*' and value-based politics as "Our Five Commitments". Among these, the only discernible reference to the old Jana Sangh was in the context of Upadhyaya's 'Integral Humanism', as the heading. In its efforts to distance from the Jana Sangh, the BJP moved towards the recognition of the composite character of the Indian nation.

At the action level also, the party did many a things to distance itself from the former Jana Sangh to give credibility to the secularist image that the BJP wanted to promote. In the

same context, Jethmalani introduced a bill in the Lok Sabha in July 1980 to legalize religious conversions. Similarly, the party's Lok Sabha election manifesto of 1984 lined that "unity in diversity has been the hallmark of Indian culture, which is a unique, multi-hued synthesis of the cultural contributions made over the centuries by different people and religions". It clearly highlighted the party's desire to distance itself from the sectarian legacy of the Jana Sangh and to craft a new image through its ideological pronouncements to moderate its pro-Hindutva posture. In addition, the party also raised various socio-economic issues like that of inflation, corruption, problems related to Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) etc.

After the setbacks the party had suffered through participating in the Janata Party, the BJP decided not to merge with another party. In the long term, this choice involved making the BJP an alternative to Congress. However, it did not exclude the possibility of forging alliances, which was an aspect of the party's effort to present a more open image. This tactic, took shape especially in the run-up to the general election of 1984. At this juncture, Vajpayee called on "all the nationalist democratic forces in the country to heed the call of the hour [and] to accept our hand of friendships extended for the pursuit of a united national effort" (Jaffrelot, C., 1996). Charan Singh, who was as keen as ever to knit together an opposition which he could lead, responded positively to this appeal to form a National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Even prior to 1984 elections, the BJP leadership was quiet vocal about joining hands with other non-Congress parties to oppose the Congress. In 1982 a partial understanding between the BJP and the Lok Dal reached to oppose the Congress in the assembly elections in Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The results were encouraging in Himachal Pradesh. A few months later (in 1983), elections were held in six states and the union territory of Delhi which produced a mixed result for the party. In the states where it had contested alone (Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh), the results were encouraging, while its effort to moderate its Hindu face backfired in Delhi. Despite its

alliance with the Lok Dal, its hope of winning a majority of seats was badly shattered. Similarly, in the state elections of Jammu & Kashmir, the Congress swept the poll in the Jammu region (a traditional stronghold of the former Jana Sangh).

Such results aroused opposition from the hardliners but Vajpayee's campaign to secularize the party and to broaden its base by aligning with other parties continued. Lending support to Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, the then BJP general secretary, admitted that, "we are not yet a national alternative to the Congress, but we have the potential of becoming that alternative by joining forces with other opposition parties". Hence, Vajpayee tried to present a secular image of the party on the one hand and to minimize divisions in the non-Congress vote by uniting the opposition against the Congress in the forthcoming parliamentary elections, on the other.

This ideological change in the policy of the BJP had added doubts to the RSS regarding its capability of promoting the Hindu nationalist cause. Some sections of the RSS did not attempt to conceal their disapproval of the BJP's efforts to attract Muslims. The party's attempt to display secular tolerance by attracting a number of Muslim personalities and candidates for state and general elections, and by encouraging candidates to participate in Muslim festivals and so on, engendered widespread dissatisfaction among the RSS cadres at the ground level. As quoted by Hansen, "the admission of a few Muslims and other 'minority leaders' into the newly formed BJP in order to consolidate its secular credentials, as well as the adoption of 'Gandhian socialism' as an official policy of the BJP, further alienated substantial sections of the more conservative and militant sections of the Sangh Parivar" (Hansen, T. B., 1999) [6]. By contrast, the Congress (I), which the RSS was probably keen not to antagonize in order to avoid repressive measures, at a later date, appeared to the RSS to be well placed in certain areas to safeguard Hindu interests, at least, than the BJP. During the state elections of 1980 and 1982 in Kerala, the RSS votes went to the Congress (I), rather than the BJP. This pattern was repeated in the Delhi and Jammu & Kashmir state elections. The elections of 1983 in Delhi crystallized all the contradictions of the BJP's tactic of openness. "This 'opening-up' antagonized the activists and cadres of the local RSS, most of whom were Punjabi in origin, and they tended to withdraw their support from the party or transfer it to the Congress (I)" (Jaffrelot, C., 1996). Such a development affected both the BJP's traditional electorate and the RSS activists in the elections in Jammu & Kashmir, also. This interpretation applies to some extent also to the parliamentary elections of December 1984. Prior to the elections, Deshmukh declared that "Rajiv Gandhi deserved 'cooperation and sympathy'. After Congress (I)'s success in the 1984 elections, an official of the RSS confided: "most of its [the BJP's] active workers who were RSS people generally preferred the Congress (I) in the elections" (Jaffrelot, C., 1996).

Unforeseen events also intervened. 'Operation Blue Star' was ordered by Indira Gandhi in June 1984 to flush out the Sikh leaders hiding in the Golden Temple. It had led to the killing of a large number of Sikhs, including Bhindranwale. This caused widespread resentment among the Sikhs, which

resulted in the assassination of Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984, by her two Sikh bodyguards producing a widespread anti-Sikh sentiment among Hindus. The assassination brought a Hindu backlash. Infact, "sensing the culmination of its secret desire to create a Hindu vote bank for the party, many Congress leaders actively participated in anti-Sikh riots and/to incited Hindus against Sikh wherever possible" (Sigh, V. B., 2004). During the General elections of 1984 "the Hindus felt concerned about 'their' nation's territorial integrity which seemed to be endangered by the non-Hindus" (Ghosh, Partha S., 2003) [5].

After the modern incarnation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in the new name as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980, the party faced the eighth Lok Sabha election for the first time held in 1984. In its manifesto which was released on 29 November 1984, the Bharatiya Janata Party wished to offer to the Nation "a new polity, new government and a new leadership" which it considered to be the "need of the hour". The party committed itself to the principles of nationalism and national integration, value based politics, democracy, positive secularism and Gandhian socialism. The party pledged to strive for a new polity, free from criminalization and corruption and for governance based on consensus instead of confrontation.

The title of the manifesto was "Towards a new Polity", in which it offered a new government which would be clean, effective, purposeful, rich variety of representative and free of corruption and criminality. National integrity, unity and cohesion were need of the hour because of the shocking assassination of the Late Prime Minister and subsequent occurrences of anti-Sikh riots.

On national politics, the party pledged to defend the unity and integrity of the nation, ensure fair elections, root out corruption, solve the Assam tangle and restore the rule of law and justice besides setting up a Human Rights Commission in place of the Minority Commission.

On national economy, the BJP pledged to give top priority to agriculture and demarcate sectors for the multinationals. The party ensured to enact a law to create Lokpal and Lokayukta.

The party also pledged to take effective steps to prevent further illegal immigration. It wished to introduce an employment guarantee scheme on the Maharashtra pattern, throughout the country. The party in its manifesto emphasized on the use of Science and Technology for increasing productivity and generating employment.

Rise and Growth of the Bharatiya Janata Party

After its formation as Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980, the party contested the election for the first time held in 1984 for the eighth Lok Sabha. In this election, the BJP had contested 224 seats (out of the total 543 parliamentary seats) and won only 2 seats with 7.74 percent vote of the electorate. During this election, the electoral environment was totally in favour of the Congress. It was not due to the work done by the party in the past but primarily due to assassination of Indira Gandhi and also partly due to the divided opposition. "Whatever anger and dissatisfaction people had with the Congress rule not only disappeared with Indira Gandhi's

assassination but were even converted into a sympathy wave for Rajiv in this election" (Malik, Y. K. and Singh, V. B., 1994). So in such political environment there was hardly any space left for any political party to perform. The half-hearted support from hardcore Hindu organizations like the RSS and VHP made the electoral situation more complicated for the BJP. Nanaji Deshmukh's appeal to the RSS to support Rajiv Gandhi had created a lot of confusion among the RSS workers. The net result was that the Congress succeeded in capturing a large number of votes of the BJP supporters and left the BJP with only two seats. However, among all the national parties, it ranked second in terms of total vote received. The main supporting area for the party was the Hindi-Speaking heartland which alone contributed 68 percent vote to the BJP. Outside this heartland, the party had some perceptible presence in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

In the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP experienced a sudden rise in its representatives in the parliament. From only 2 seats in 1984, the party increased its tally to 85 seats (out of the total 225 contested seats) in the 1989 elections with 11.36 percent vote. The electoral experience in this election was memorable and morale-booster for the BJP. The electoral gains were unprecedented in the BJP's history since the days of the BJS. Previously, "it had never exceeded 10 percent of the vote or 35 seats nationally, except for 1977 when as a component of the Janata Party it won 99 of 295 seats won by the Janata Party" (Sridharan, E., 2005) [2].

The results of 1989 elections were in striking contrast to the dismal debacle faced by the party in the 1984 general elections. The reasonably resounding return of 85 candidates in the ninth Lok Sabha was the beginning of the BJP's upward journey. This change in the electoral gains of the party was because of the combination of two factors -- seat adjustments with the JD (Janata Dal) which resulted in one on one contests against the Congress in most of the seats it had contested in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh; and Shiv Sena in Maharashtra; and a sizeable swing in its favour. The other important reasons were the change in party leadership and the party's reaffirming faith in Bharatiya Jana Sangh ideology and ceremonies related to *Ram Shila Pujans*. The BJP improved its representation through out North India and in Maharashtra, where its association with the Shiv Sena helped it to obtain 23.7% of the vote.

The BJP contested the 1991 general elections without the help of other parties and made a remarkable performance crossing 20 percent vote barrier for the first time. It was one of the significant moments in the history of the BJP. It became the second largest party in the 1991 elections winning 120 seats with 20.11 percent vote after the Congress (232 seats and 36.26 % vote).

In the 1991 parliamentary election, the party had raised many socio-economic issues before the electorate. Its poll campaign, however, was focused on two issues; firstly, on Hindutva and construction of a Ram mandir in Ayodhya and secondly, on the price rise and spread of corruption under the Congress rule. The role of the campaign made by RSS, VHP and other organizations in favour of the BJP was prominent during this

election. As quoted by Shah, "Various other Hindu sects also extended support to the BJP and appealed to their devotees to vote for the party which would protect Hindu interests. The message was clear -- only BJP could do that. Soon, Jain *munis* were also seen joining hands with Hindu *sadhus* and saints in support of the BJP candidates. The VHP and other RSS front organizations insisted that the construction of the Ram mandir was a matter of right to correct the injustice done to them in the past by Muslim invaders, and a question of faith and 'national pride'" (Shah, Ghanshyam, 1998) [7]. The VHP said that voting for the BJP in the election was equivalent to performing kar seva.

Although the election result did not meet with the high expectations of the BJP, but the party managed to make itself a "respective" choice in the fast-growing middle class. The party also succeeded in breaking its image of a North Indian party and expanded itself in the east and south. The BJP's growing strength was noticeable in this election. As stated by Ghosh, "Barring Himachal Pradesh, its gain was in the entire Hindi- Heartland. There was hardly any doubt that this gain was largely on account of the Ram Temple agitation and the tirade against the so-called 'minorityism. Opinion polls conducted in early 1991 showed that 42 to 54 percent of Hindus in northern and eastern India endorsed Advani indictment of 'minorityism' and his party's stand on the Ayodhya dispute" (Ghosh, Partha S., 2003) [5].

Out of the total 120 victories the party had in this election, maximum (87) were from the Hindi Speaking States. In this election, the party had improved its vote share appreciably in Uttar Pradesh. Outside the Hindi- Speaking States, the vote share for the party had recorded immense improvements in the states of Karnataka and Gujarat. There were basically a combination of three factors which worked in favour or against the party: mobilization of Hindus through Rath Yatra; the Mandal Commission Report; and the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. It has also been found that whereas in some states the Mandal effects worked against the party (Bihar, Maharashtra) in some states (Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka) it helped the party as large number of higher castes people voted the BJP as a backlash to Mandal Commission Report. The Hindu factor worked well for the party in Gujarat. Despite its improved performance in Karnataka and Assam, the party continues to be a party of North India in general and Hindi Speaking States in particular.

The 1996 elections catapulted the BJP to a position of the largest political party in India. The party had increased its share of representatives in the Lok Sabha from 120 in 1991 to 161 in 1996 with 20.29 percent vote polled. With 140 seats, the Congress was shifted to second place. While the party had retained significant elements of its Hindu nationalist discourse, the electoral performance in this election was not linked directly to militant propagation of Hindutva as in the case of the 1991 elections. The party did it through a rather moderate Hindu mobilization campaign and limited alliances with regional parties.

Following the "exhaustion" of the Hindutva electoral platform after the demolition of the Babri Mosque, the BJP tried to project itself as a "responsible" national party in the elections

followed. The party tried to distance itself from the militant Hindu organizations and their programmes. The BJP made its campaign very effective, attacking the Rao government aggressively for its all-round failures including a wide range of corruption charges and for mortgaging the *Swadeshi* interests by allowing free trade to multinationals. It carefully chooses to underplay the Hindutva card. The party formed alliances with regional/state parties like as; AIADMK, Akali Dal (Badal), Haryana Vikas Party and others.

The party's electoral performance in the 1996 election was quite impressive. There were improvements in the number of seats contested (468 in 1991 to 471 in 1996), percent vote polled (20.11 to 20.29 percent) and number of seats won (120 to 161). The party in this election had polled 6,79,50,851 votes - an increase of 1,26,05,776 votes than the 1991 elections. The close scrutiny of the vote data reveals that the Hindi-Speaking States continues to be most fruitful region for the BJP. In this election, this region contributed 61.49 percent of the total vote polled by the party. It also shows that the share of this region in the party's has improved (56.96 percent in 1991). Outside this region, the other major contributors in the party's total vote share were Maharashtra (9.10 percent), Gujarat (7.14) and Karnataka (6.84). In consonance with regional concentration of the party vote in the Hindi-Speaking States, it also recorded about 74 (73.91%) of the total seats won by it from this region. In this way, in this election also the party continues to be a party of Hindi-Speaking States with its extension in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka. In the absence of any wave in favour of the BJP during this election, two factors were mainly responsible for the impressive gains made by it. First, was the ability of the party to forge pre-election alliances with other parties, i.e., the Samata Party in Bihar, Haryana Vikas Party in Haryana and Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. Secondly, the party succeeded in consolidating its support among the upper castes while fracturing the votes of the OBCs.

The results of the 1998 Lok Sabha elections also went the BJP way. The party increased its seats tally from 161 in 1996 to 182 in this election and polled 25.59 percent vote as compared to 20.29 percent in 1996. More importantly, with its tactical alliances, it not only succeeded in gathering complementary support for the party but, also consolidated its position among the voters who turned towards it in search of an alternative to the Congress. Despite Sonia Gandhi's influence in attracting further desertions from amongst its traditional supporter's, i.e., Muslims, dalits and tribals, the share of the Congress vote came down from 28.8 percent in 1996 to 25.8 percent in 1998 although it got almost the same number of seats (140 in 1996 and 141 in 1998) in the Lok Sabha. This confirms the argument that the BJP made further inroads into the Congress party's upper caste and class support bases (Singh, V. B., 2004). The BJP made significant gains in the south and east, on the account of its alliance with regional parties in these regions. The increase in the seats won and votes polled by the BJP in the 1998 election was an important break through, as it intended to present itself as a moderate party under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

As no alliance could gain an absolute majority in this

parliamentary election, the President of India invited Atal Bihari Vajpayee (the leader of the BJP) to form the government and win a vote of confidence. On 19 March 1998, Vajpayee was sworn in as the Prime Minister of India. On 28 March, 1998, with the support of TDP from outside, the BJP was able to prove its majority. This helped the Vajpayee government to move confidently and comfortably. The party released the national agenda, a broadly framed document keeping on the specific demands of its alliance partners. Reacting to their demands, the party carefully avoided all controversial issues, such as the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, scrapping of Article 370, the introduction of a Uniform Civil Code.

In April 1999, the AIADMK withdrew its support from the BJP led coalition government. Though the National Conference came forward to the rescue of the government with its support, yet it lost confidence vote in the Lok Sabha by a margin of one vote. Thus, the House was dissolved and fresh elections were announced.

The 1999 parliamentary election was the last election of the 20th century in India. It provided a new version to the Indian politics in the form of 24-party coalition. Broadly, this election continued the trends experienced throughout the 1990s both at the national and state levels. "Niche" political parties "at the state level continue their inroads into larger political entities so that coalition politics [was] essential. Political parties capable of winning a parliamentary majority on their own no longer exist at the national level, and [were] becoming rarer at the state level. The BJP's recognition of this central political fact enabled it to construct the winning National Democratic Alliance (NDA) prior to the 1999 elections" (Wallace, P., 2003)^[4].

The 1999 Lok Sabha election was the third mid-term poll within a period of four years. The nation went to polls in September-October, 1999. The BJP resorted to socio-political engineering. It made alliance with 23 smaller, regional parties of diversified character and background. The NDA was redesigned with the combination of a good number of new allies to face the election. This election became a water-shed for the BJP in the history of two decades. The party did not publish its manifesto which many said has led to the dilution of the party, its image and identity. The BJP had contested the 1999 elections more as NDA than as BJP. Vajpayee became the unanimous choice of the leaders of the NDA and he was projected as an able Prime-ministerial candidate. The NDA adopted a national agenda for governance, which put a suspension on the issues of the BJP: Ayodhya, Article 370 and Uniform Civil Code.

In spite of all earlier predictions, the BJP in 1999 election had won 182 seats on its own while the NDA along with its allies managed to get a majority in the house. On the other hand, the Congress suffered a great set back and could win only 113 seats. In this election, "the BJP had not only enhanced its reach to wider segments of society, but also seemed to have firmed up its grip among the voters moving away from the Congress since the 1991 Lok Sabha elections" Singh, V. B., 2004).

In 1999, once again the BJP had emerged as the single largest

party, the position it attained for the first time in 1996 elections and maintained in 1998 elections as well. The BJP's winning percentage in terms of seats won out of the total contested was far ahead than the Congress. The BJP had fielded only 339 candidates, as compared to 453 of the Congress. The BJP won 53.68 percent of seats it contested, while the Congress won only 25.16 percent. In this election, the BJP won identical number of seats to that of 1998 elections. However, the gap between it and the seats won by the second ranking party, the Congress, had widened further. It was 21 seats in 1996, 41 seats in 1998 and 68 seats in 1999. In terms of vote percentage, on the other hand, the gap between the two parties had increased in favour of the Congress. This was also due to less number of seats contested by the BJP in this election. The increase in the percentage average vote by the BJP from 36.17 percent in 1998 to 39.55 percent in 1999 indicates the consolidation of the party vote bank. Despite attained a declining trend; the Hindi-Speaking States continued to be the main supporting region for the BJP. Outside this region, the main supporting areas for the party were Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

The General election 2004 was held much before the term of Atal Bihari Vajpayee expired. It was reported that Vajpayee was not in favour of an early poll but the mounting pressures from the coalition partners forced him to do so. The main reason behind forcing Vajpayee for an early election was the BJP's victory in Gujarat. The assembly elections were held in Gujarat after the infamous Godhra carnage and gave thumping majority to the BJP. This victory gave a lot of confidence to several of the partners in the ruling coalition of the certainty of the return to power by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The NDA went to the polls on "the basis of economic growth that they labeled 'India Shining'. Thus the economy and governance became issues" for the elections (Roy, R. and Wallace, P., (eds.) 2007) ^[1]. Such issues were unusual in the Indian Democracy where elections are basically contested on the lines of caste, tribe, language, religion, personality etc. The Congress and its partners targeted the "India Shining" factor with "emphasis on attacking poverty".

The General Elections of May 2004 was more or less the same as that of 1996, 98 and 1999 elections, which saw coalition politics and large scale defections in action. The Congress, which secured just 145 seats in comparison to BJP's 138 seats, was able to form the Government with the support of the regional parties and the left. The BJP had fielded its candidates on 364 seats and won 138 seats with 22.16 percent vote of the electorate.

It seems that the "India Shining" campaign was in large measure conceived to counteract the possible consequences of Gujarat on the elections. The shifts, in electorates even small in size, became critical even in the case of BJP's own voters. Those supporters of 1999 who found it difficult to accept the fact that their own party had violated the limits (*maryada*) of Hindutva politics in Gujarat, (belonging mostly to the dalits, tribals and lower OBCs) who were attracted to the Hindutva party as they saw in its politics the possibility of their upward economic and social mobility, deserted the party in 2004. The survey data on 2004 elections, revealed that the marginal loss

of support for the BJP and its allies, and the consequent loss of power was mainly due to two types of voters deserting the BJP: (a) the dalits, tribals and the lower OBCs who felt that they did not belong to the BJP's newly formed exclusive 'feel good club of India'; (b) a significant section of BJP's conventional middle class supporters who endorsed the party's economic politics also turned away because they felt that the majoritarian politics of hate and reforms cannot go well together. In the aftermath of the NDA's defect in the 2004 general election, it was a routine exercise for the Hindu nationalists, particularly the VHP and RSS office bearers to attribute the electoral failure to the BJP's insufficient commitment to Hindutva politics.

The BJP had polled 22.16 percent vote in 2004 elections. There was a negative swing of 1.59 percent vote for the party in this election. In the preceding election also, the party had experienced a negative swing of 1.84 percent in its percent vote. Consequent upon this continuous decline, the party was at loss of as many as 44 seats in this election (182 in 1999 to 138 in 2004). The Hindi-Speaking region remained the main supporting area for the party. This region contributed 52.48 percent of the total vote polled and 56.52 percent seats won by the party.

Conclusion

The formation of the Bharatiya Janata Party was result of the setbacks the party had suffered through participating in the Janata Party. After the setbacks the BJP decided not to merge with another party. However, in the long term, it did not exclude the possibility of forging alliances, which was an aspect of the party's effort to present a more open image and an alternative to Congress. After its formation in 1980, the BJP contested the election for the first time held in 1984 for the eighth Lok Sabha. Due to the sympathy wave in 1984 elections the BJP could open its account with only two seats. The party's gradual rise started in the 1989 Lok Sabha elections when it was able to win 85 seats due to seat adjustments with the Janata Dal and *Shilyanas* ceremonies. After that it never looked behind and its journey kept on ascending. In the early 1990s it benefited from its Hindutva issue. The *Ramjanambhoomi* movement helped the BJP to win 120 seats in 1991 elections and to become the second largest party in the Indian politics. In 1996, it aligned with regional parties and increased its representatives (120 to 161) in the parliament and became the largest party leaving the Congress behind. It kept its status of the largest party during the 1998 and 1999 elections with identical number of seats (182 seats in both elections) and formed its first government on 19 March 1998 and also in the 1999 Lok Sabha. However, in 2004 elections it lost its first position and shifted to the second rank. The BJP retained its earlier position in the 2009 parliamentary election as the second largest party. Presently BJP is leading our nation with single largest party (282 seats) since May, 2014.

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