

**By Sidharth Mishra**



The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has never had it so good in the national Capital. Though it is not the first time that it has won all the seven Lok Sabha seats, it did it earlier in 1999 and again in 2014, however this time around it's their vote share in the city has risen to an unprecedented 56 %.

The last time BJP got votes somewhere closer to the 50% mark was during 1993 Vidhan Sabha polls. Then under the leadership of a redoubtable Madanlal Khurana and at the peak of Ramjanambhoomi movement, it had polled around 47% votes.

Since then the population of the national Capital has not only gone up but its demography has also changed. Today, 33.5 per cent of the total 1.36 crore voters across the seven Lok Sabha constituencies are Purvanchalis. Their presence varies from 24 per cent in Chandni Chowk to 41 per cent in east Delhi. This has given Delhi the shape of a real time cosmopolitan city even in electoral terms. Thus, it's not surprising that the voters in the national Capital have bettered on the national mood, polling 56% votes in the favour of the Narendra Modi-led BJP.

Though majority of the analysts and opinion polls in the national Capital had given all the seven seats to the BJP, none had predicted the kind of quantum jump in the vote share, which has now come to fore. The BJP has commanded between 32% to 36% votes in the national Capital across in all the elections which followed the 1993 Vidhan Sabha polls, excepting the 1999 and 2014 LoK Sabha polls.

## BJP Needs To Guard Its Highest Ever Vote Share In Delhi Till Assembly Polls In 2020

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The Modi Wave 1.0 in 2014 had given the party about 8 % extra votes taking its vote share to 44 %. The time it has jumped to 56%, meaning almost 20% of the party's vote share in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls has come from floating voters and undoubtedly in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Our electoral history has shown that whenever a leader provides a party charismatic propulsion, be it Indira Gandhi in 1971, Rajiv Gandhi in 1984 and before them Jawaharlal Nehru in 1952 and 1957, there is no chance for the opposition, whatever kind of combination they may form.

Thus such analysts, who could be rushing to draw the conclusion that the coming together of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Congress could have avoided the rout in Delhi, are advised caution. It did not happen in Uttar Pradesh (despite arch rivals SP-BSP coming together) and it would not have happened in Delhi.

The Congress's vote share in this polls is about 22 %, whereas that of the Aam Aadmi Party is down to 18 %. But for a somewhat credible performance by Raghav Chadha on the South Delhi seat, where he polled 28 % of the votes, AAP's share could have been further down.

Chadha's case was helped by Congress fielding an absolute political novice in boxer Vijender Singh. The other seat where the AAP managed to come second was the reserved North West Delhi seat. Guggan Singh of the AAP with 20% votes bettered Rajesh Liloithia of the Congress, whose vote share was a meagre 17 %. Liloithia's nomination had led to a rebellion with local strongman Rajkumar Chouhan leaving the Congress to join the BJP.

The performance of his party should cause concern for Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as AAP's vote share is down to all time low ever since it entered the electoral politics fighting 2013 assembly elections. In 2013 it had a vote share of around 30 %, which improved further during the 2014 Lok Sabha polls and broke the ceiling in 2015 assembly polls touching 54 %.

From winning 67 out of 70 in 2015 Assembly polls, in less than two years AAP was reduced to 48 out of 270 in civic body polls with a vote share of 25 percent. Every bypoll, whether Assembly or municipal corporation, conducted post-2015 Assembly elections reiterated their decline. Now the Lok Sabha polls has registered a vote share of meagre 18% for them pushing

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AAP to the third position behind the Congress.

Coming second on the five of the seven Lok Sabha seats with a vote share of 22% in 2019, from having lost deposit in most of the segments during the 2015 assembly polls, must have come as a consolation for the Congress party. Also the huge vote share of the BJP (56%) would make them escape the criticism of not entering into an alliance with AAP and failing to stop the Modi juggernaut.

Though rise in Congress's vote share is credible but there are no best losers' award in politics. As things stand today, there is a yawning gap between the BJP and its rivals. The vote shares are indicative of the Narendra Modi led party having garnered support from all the communities except may be of the minorities.

The challenge before the party after winning all the seven Delhi Lok Sabha seats in 2019 is to maintain the momentum for the next 10 months till February 2020 when assembly polls are held in the city. They frittered away the advantage of winning all the seven seats in 2014, when they were reduced to just three assembly seats during the 2015 Vidhan Sabha polls.

The statistics show that a large number of votes lost by AAP (about 8%) from the municipal polls in 2017 have gone to the BJP as the Congress has improved its tally since then by just about 1%. The BJP today has an advantage but has to put the house in order in its Delhi unit to win the assembly polls in 2020. A loss here would dim the halo which the BJP has acquired for now.

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