

# The Historical Assembly Elections (2022): Uttar Pradesh

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## Abstract

The history of elections in modern period starts from 1920. After independence first general elections took place in 1951-52. Congress dominated the first three general elections. In 1980's we see the rise of Bhartiya Janta Party, which reached its acme during 2014 general elections. In 2017 U.P assembly elections Akhilesh Yadav's (SP) government was replaced by BJP government under the leadership of Yogi Adityanath. Between 2017 to 2022 his government worked very hard to mobilise the Hindu majoritarian populations. Through his good governance he was able to convince the U.P citizens to re-elect him in 2022 assembly elections. This was a historical assembly result for U.P.

**Key Words:** UP, Elections, Mobilization, BJP

## Introduction

After long years of struggle, India attained independence from the British rule. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of free India, addressed a special session of the Constituent Assembly that night. This was the famous 'tryst with destiny' speech. It was unfortunate that freedom came with the partition of country that is India and Pakistan. Independent India broadly faced three kind of challenges.<sup>1</sup> The first and the immediate challenge was to shape a nation that was united, yet accommodative of the diversity in our society. India was a land of continental size and diversity: its people spoke different languages and followed different cultures and religions. The second challenge was to establish democracy. India adopted representative democracy based on the parliamentary form of government. These features ensure that the political competition would take place in a democratic framework. A democratic constitution is necessary but not sufficient for establishing a democracy. The challenge was to develop democratic practices in accordance with the constitution. The third challenge was to ensure

the development and wellbeing of the entire society and not only of some sections. Indian constitution clearly laid down the principle of equality and special protection to socially disadvantaged groups and religious and cultural communities. The constitution also set out in the Directive Principles of State Policy the welfare goals that democratic politics must achieve. The real challenge now was to evolve effective policies for economic development and eradication of poverty. To deal with all these challenges a strong and regular government was required, which was provided by the Congress under the leadership of Jawahar Lal Nehru. The Congress dominated the Indian politics from 1952-1967 elections. This period was known as the Era of One Party Dominance.<sup>2</sup>

### **History of Electoral Politics in India**

Modern states are nation-states or multi-nationality states. Their size and population make it difficult for them to practice direct democracy as a form of government, except in some cases at a local level of governance. Hence all modern democratic governments are representative governments, that is, governments elected by the people. Right of the people to vote and elect their representatives to make laws for them is called franchise (derived from the old French word *franc*, i.e., free), or suffrage (derived from the Latin word, *suffragari*, to vote for). When all adult members of population, men and women, have an equal right to vote, then it is called Adult Franchise or Universal Franchise. In India adult franchise has been recognized as the basis of representative government.<sup>3</sup> In Indian context the franchise provision for the first time was brought by the Government of India Act of 1919. This was recommended by Lord Southborough's Committee under Montagu-Chelmsford reform.<sup>4</sup>

In Indian political history elections have been used extensively since 1920 as the basis for representative institutions in India from the local to the national level. Electoral data is an important source of information, for those interested in Indian political activity and political change in the Indian sub-continent. Before first general election (1951-52) at the centre were the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly of India until 1947 and after that (though elected in a very different way) the Constituent Assembly of India. At the provincial level i.e., United Province(now Uttar Pradesh ) there was a Legislative Council from 1920 until 1936 which was then replaced by a bi-cameral legislature, comprising a Legislative Council and a Legislative Assembly, which operated from 1937 until 1951.<sup>5</sup>

The Government of India Act 1919 provided the framework for the elections to the Uttar Pradesh (U.P) Legislative Council between 1920 and 1936 (general elections were held in 1920, 1923, 1926 and 1930) but these provisions were completely replaced at the provincial level after 1937 by those of Government of India Act, 1935. The General elections of 1937 for the new bi-cameral provincial legislature; the triennial elections for the Legislative Council (1940, 1946, and 1948) and the general elections for the Legislative Assembly in 1946 were all held under the 1935 Act. The election for Constituent Assembly were not conducted under either of the Acts of 1919 or 1935. The Constituent Assembly was the main practical result of the work of the Cabinet Mission of 1946. The Indian Constitution by which India is being governed came into operation on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950 was the outcome of Constituent Assembly. Article 324 to 329 in Part XV of Indian Constitution provides for free and fair elections under the directions and control of an Election Commission.<sup>6</sup>The Election Commission of India was setup in January 1950. Sukumar Sen became the first Chief Election Commissioner. The country's first general elections were expected sometimes in 1950 itself. But the Election Commission discovered that it was not going to be easy to hold a free and fair election in a country of India's size. The elections had to be postponed twice and finally held from October 1951 to February 1952. But this election is referred to as the 1952 election since most parts of the country voted in January 1952.<sup>7</sup> Indian National Congress, Communist Party of India, Socialist Party, Kisan MajdoorPraja Party, Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Mahasabha, Gantantra Parishad, Peoples Democratic Party, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Independent, and others, all took part in the first general elections. Congress dominated the elections and won 364 of the 489 seats in Lok Sabha. In the 1950's Jana Sangh remained on the margin of electoral politics and was able to secure only 3 Lok Sabha seats in 1952 elections and 4 seats in 1957 general elections to Lok Sabha. In the early years its support came mainly from the urban areas in the Hindi speaking states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. The party's leaders included Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, DeenDayal Upadhyay and Balraj Madhok. The Bharatiya Janata Party which came into formation in 1980's traces its roots to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh.

### **The Rise of Bharatiya Janta Party and U.P Elections (2022)**

The Bharatiya Janta Party (hence forth BJP) under the guidance of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani was officially founded in

1980. The first general election it contested was in 1984, in which it won only 2 Lok Sabha seats. Following the elections in 1996, the BJP became the largest party in the Lok Sabha for the first time but was able to form government with its allied for a short span of time. This party attained its full height in during 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections held in 2014.<sup>8</sup> U.P elections of 2022 should be seen in the background of 2014, 2019 (general elections) and 2017 state elections (U.P). The 2014 elections saw the decline of grand old Congress Party. It emphasizes the end of coalition politics, with a single party coming into power with a clear majority.<sup>9</sup> Three major factors for the BJP's massive win over the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA) were— the high inflation caused by Onion crisis, slowing growth and rising of food prices; Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement in 2011, which united the country against corruption and provided the voters an alternative to the Congress party and its allies; and lastly the Presidential-style campaign of Narendra Modi. The BJP's unexpected victory is credited to Modi's personality, with some terming the Modi wave a "Tsunami". Wallace compares Modi's plebiscitary election to Indira Gandhi's slogan "a government that works" that resulted in her landslide victory in 1980.<sup>10</sup> Historian Ramchandra Guha while commenting on the weak leadership of Congress party said that "Hone cannot invokeH(Its) ancestors to justify one's own pre-eminence".<sup>11</sup> In 2014 Lok Sabha elections party won only 44 seats which shows the end of dynastic politics within the party. One can for the time being, conclude that the support of it is dwindling, with the voters losing confidence in its less able and beleaguered leadership. Sudha Pai and Avinash Kumar argued that U.P is most important state in any election. They ascribed BJP's "spectacular victory" to the "revival of its organization and social base" in the state, with Modi, supported by the Sangh Parivar, replacing the old guard, including Vajpayee and Advani. This saw extended support from the backward and the dalit voters who became part of a broad "Hindu vote bank," thereby undermining the "strong identity-based parties" in the state. It is believed that a key to the victory was the two-pronged campaign "by Modi and his confident Amit Shah, using both Hindutva and development", appealing to all sections.<sup>12</sup> This election also witnessed communal mobilization and violence especially in Western U.P. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) with 20% of the dalit votes could not win any seat. Internal decay and disappointment with Akhilesh Yadav as the Chief Minister, among other factors, resulted in the Samajwadi Party (SP) wining only five Lok Sabha seats in U.P. The Congress Party's "crushing defeat" in the state resulted from the "absence of a strong organization, social base and effective leadership." In the light of above facts, it can be analyzed that "the dynasty can no longer

substitute for performance.” In 2019 general elections also BJP performed well. During 2017 U.P assembly elections BJP dislodged Akhilesh Yadav’s government.

This research paper highlights the historical victory of Yogi Adityanath government in 2022 assembly elections. This is historical because 37 years old record of not returning of any incumbent government has been broken in U.P. This will have many implications on the polity and governance of India as a nation. Uttar Pradesh having area of 2, 36,286 sq km., having the largest population of 19.98 crores (2011 census), elects 80 Lok Sabha members.<sup>13</sup> The victory of Yogi Adityanath in 2022 elections shows a duel between Hindutva model and governance and those who were opposed to it. In this assembly election the battle was between BJP and SP and their respective alliances. On the one hand, the BJP and its activists were sure about their victory. They were sure of their social base and the scheme’s benefits received by the poor under good governance of Yogi Adityanath.<sup>14</sup> Akhilesh Yadav started his campaign in Lucknow with the slogan *Aa rahehai Akhilesh* (Akhilesh is coming). The SP was counting on the newly formed alliance with a few smaller parties along with the enormous issues that were not properly dealt with by the BJP. These issues were: unemployment, farmer’s agitation, lack of investment in the state, stray animals and foremost physical attack on the Dalits and Muslims by the elements allegedly supported by the party in power and administration. But election results have shown that throughout the five years rule of the BJP the opposition was numb on all of the above issues. The five years rule (2017-22) of the BJP government under Yogi Adityanath followed the policy of Hindutva and good governance. Adityanath campaigned in western, central and eastern regions of the state extensively. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s speech also helped in mobilizing the Hindu’s vote through the rhetoric of *shamshaan versus kabristan* (Hindu crematorium versus Muslim graveyards) and Eid versus Diwali (Hindu versus Muslim festivals).<sup>15</sup> Prime Minister Modi and Adityanath have complimented each other in their metanarrative of nationalism and development shrouded in Hindu hegemony. Yogi government’s prime agenda was the Hinduisation of politics and administration, both in its outlook and action. Some of the majoritarian cultural agenda forwarded by the BJP were renaming of the cities, cases against love jihad, anti-conversion law, Uttar Pradesh cabinet Cow Slaughter Prevention (Amendment) Ordinance (2020), more funds for Kumbh mela, lighting lakhs of diya, police officials throwing flowers on kawarias, ban on liquor and meat shops in the route of kawarias, painting Haj house with Saffron color. To deal with law and order, the state government followed the policy

of *Thok do* (hir/kill them) and operation *Langda* (Shoot in the Legs). In the process, fake encounters with petty criminals or even innocent people took place. A total of 151 people were killed in such police encounters. Opposition lamed Yogi Government that Hindutva government was reduced to Thakur rule. Many OBC leaders deserted BJP and joined just before the assembly elections.

Yogi government popularized the importance of double engine government because it has faster rate of growth.<sup>16</sup> In U.P elections many factors like caste, religion, language etc., are important. Some experts were convinced about the victory of SP alliance in 2022 elections in the overall scenario of economy, cultural hegemony, and law and order situation. But results proved otherwise. The SP alliance got 125 seats, whereas the BJP alliance got 273 seats. The BJP and SP alone got 255 and 111 seats. The BJP got 41.29% of the valid votes whereas the SP got 32.06%. The total votes in favor of BJP was 3.8 crore as against the SP's 2.95 crore. In BJP upper caste, Brahmins, Rajput and Baniya got higher share of representation and in SP the majority of seats were won by Muslim candidates.

## Conclusion

Uttar Pradesh assembly elections of 2022 became historical loaded with many political implications for the national politics. After a gap of 37 years Yogi Adityanath government made it null and void that any incumbent government cannot repeat its victory. With its good governance in which welfare measures were given importance convinced the majority of people to choose him again. He mobilized the Hindu population which is in majority in the state. Through his whirling campaign he ignited the Hindu nationalism which was converted into votes. On the other hand Akhilesh Yadav increased his vote share and number of seats even though could not reach up to the magic number to form the government. In this election Akhilesh Yadav got more Muslim votes and increased his tally in dalit dominated constituency which is a good sign for a healthy democracy.

## References:

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- [11] Ibid, p 13.
- [12] Ibid, p119.
- [13] *India 2021*, publication division, delhi, p 702.
- [14] Manjurali, *uttarpradesh elections a duel in or for democracy*, article published in epw, june 11, 2022, vol lvii no 24, p 10.
- [15] Bjp used religious facts to mobilize hindu votes. Akhilesh was unable to counter it.
- [16] Majurali, ibid, p12.<sup>1</sup>ncert, *politics in india since independence*, 2006, pp 4-5.