

ELECTORAL POLITICS IN KARNATAKA IN THE 1990s: AN OVERVIEW¹

Dr. Sandeep Shastri

Department of Political Science
Bangalore University, Bangalore - 560 056

Approaching the Theme

The 1990's have been witness to significant developments in the electoral politics of the State of Karnataka. The period has seen as many as four Lok Sabha elections and two assembly elections, each election ushering in a new trend and triggering off a series of political developments of far reaching political significance. If in the 1991 poll, the Karnataka electorate sent a large Congress team to Lok Sabha, It decided to endorse the claims of the Janata Dal in the 1994 Assembly Elections. The 1996 Lok Sabha elections witnessed the twilight of Congress hegemony with the Janata Dal securing a majority of the seats and within two years, in 1998, the BJP/Lok Shakti alliance was favoured by the Karnataka voters. The very next year, the Congress won a majority of the seats in both the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the State.

Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka witnessed a new trend in the 1990s. Prior to 1996, in every Lok Sabha election, the electorate had strongly endorsed those who had contested on the Congress party ticket. In the first 10 general elections to the Lok Sabha held between 1952 and 1991, the Congress party won nearly 90% of the seats. Even on the four occasions when the party fared badly at the national level (1967, 1977, 1989 and 1991) the relative performance of the party in the state was appreciably better (see Shastri 1999a: 2440). However, the 1996 and 1998 elections saw the Congress being relegated to the third and second position respectively. Further, since 1991, in every Lok Sabha election, the Karnataka voters have supported a different political party/alliance.

In the four major assembly elections held in the last two decades (1983, 1989, 1994 and 1999), the electorate in the State have categorically rejected the ruling party and paved the way for another party to come to power². The message the voters wished to convey, especially to the ruling party (both the one voted out and the one voted in) is categorical : non-performance and intra-party squabbles will not find favour³ (see Shastri 1999b).

Yet another trend that can be discerned in Karnataka is that the when it comes to who should come to power in the state, the voters have acted differently

as compared to the national electorate, In 1978, the Karnataka electorate emphatically endorsed the claims of the Congress even as the Janata Party was in power at the centre. In 1983, though the Congress was in power at the centre, it was voted out of power in the state. In 1985, the Assembly elections were held in the backdrop of the Congress sweep at the national level. The Karnataka voter however, voted the Janata party back to power. In the 1989 Assembly elections (Lok Sabha and Assembly elections were held simultaneously) the Congress formed the government in Karnataka while the National Front came to power at the national level. In 1994, though the Narasimha Rao headed a Congress government in Delhi, the voters in the State preferred the Janata Dal as the ruling party. In 1999, while the Congress was voted as power in the State, the NDA formed the government in Delhi.

It is also interesting to note the electoral contest in Karnataka has generally involved two major formulations, with the third force being rarely favoured by the voters. If in 1978, the Congress (Brahmananda Reddy) was rejected as third force, the same fate awaited the Janata Party (JP) in 1989, Karnataka Congress Party in 1994 and the Janata Dal (S) in 1999. In every election, the two major political formulations have cornered more than 70% of the voted polled.

The Karnataka electorate has also not favoured regional parties, either in Lok Sabha or Assembly elections. Till the 1960s the electoral competition in the State was largely between the Congress on the one hand and Socialist Party/Swatantra Party on the other. After the Congress split in 1969, the two factions of the Congress were the principal political forces in the State. With the formation of the Janata Party in 1977, it became the main opposition party. Subsequently, the Janata Party/Dal and the BJP have emerged as crucial players in the electoral politics of the state along with the Congress party. Though, regional parties have occasionally been formed, they have had limited electoral success. Devraj Urs floated the Kranti Ranga in the 1980s but the party later merged with the Janata Party. Bangarappa formed the Karnataka Congress Party but this party largely played the role of a spoiler (for the Congress) in the 1994 Assembly elections. He subsequently merged the party with the Congress. The Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) has also achieved limited electoral success in Karnataka winning 2 seats in 1989. 1 Seat in 1994 and drawing a blank in 1999. While the Lok Shakti did emerge in Karnataka in 1998, the analysis later in the paper would draw attention to its role and the advantage it derived from the alliance with the BJP⁴.

Electoral Politics in the 1980s and 1990s

An ideal backdrop for the study of Karnataka's politics in the 1990s would be the outcome of the 1983 Assembly elections and the subsequent political developments in the state. Till the 1983, the Congress had a near monopoly

over power in the state. In the 1983 Assembly elections no party was in a position to secure a clear majority, and the Janata Party (the single largest party) formed a minority government with the outside support of the Leftist parties and the BJP. The maturity of the Karnataka electorate was strikingly demonstrated in 1984 - 85 when they elected 24 Congress candidates (Out of 28) in the Lok Sabha poll from the state in December 1984 and within a few months in March 1985, expressed a desire that the Janata Party government continue in the state and even gave it a clear majority in the assembly elections. It is interesting to note that the performance of the Janata party minority government (1983-85) was more effective as compared to the Janata party government between 1985 and 1989 when it enjoyed a clear majority in the assembly. In its second innings it was plagued by infighting and an intense internal power struggle culminating in the dismissal of the Janata government and declaration of President's Rule in 1989.

The 1989 Assembly elections, held after a seven month spell of President's Rule, saw the Congress return to power in the State with a three-fourths majority in the Assembly. Never before had any party in State, bagged such a high percentage of seats in the assembly. The Congress had all the factors going in its favour after the 1989 election results - a fund of goodwill, a steam roller majority and an opposition which had been decimated and was in total disarray. However, gradually the party seemed to lose direction. The voters sounded a warning in the 1991 Lok Sabha poll by electing only 23 of the Congress candidates. The party did not seem to read the writing on the wall and continued to be plagued by infighting and a lack lustre performance of the government. During the five years in power, the party high command changed the Chief Minister thrice.

It was against this backdrop that the 1994 Assembly elections were held. The emergence of the Janata Dal as the ruling party took many observers by surprise. A party which has just managed to win 24 assembly seats in 1989 and drew a blank in the 1991 Lok Sabha poll was hardly expected to emerge as ruling party in 1994. While many attributed the Janata Dal victory to the anti-incumbency syndrome, it needs to be remembered that even if the voters were unhappy with the Congress party they had a choice of opting either for the Janata Dal or the BJP. The fact that the Janata Dal secured a majority was indicative of positive vote for the party (see Shastri 1995).

It also needs to be noted that the Janata Dal victory in Karnataka had little to do with the national agenda of the party. The state leaders made a conscious effort to distance themselves from the developments at the national level. The electoral verdict was essentially dictated by local factors and considerations. The emergence of the Janata Dal as credible alternative to the Congress needs to be viewed in the backdrop of the efforts of the leadership 'troika' (Hegde, Deve Gowda and Bommai) demonstrating their unity and collective leadership.

The 1996 Lok Sabha Elections

The 1996 Lok Sabha elections were held within a year and a half of the Janata Dal coming to power in the State. The three major political parties in the state—Congress, Janata Dal and BJP—had evolved elaborate electoral strategies for the Lok Sabha poll. For all the three, success in Karnataka was crucial both regionally and nationally. For the Janata Dal, winning a sizeable number of seats in the state was vital for the survival of its state government. Earlier, in 1984, Hegde had resigned as Chief Minister. Moral grounds, when his party won just 4 of the 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka. For the Congress, a large contingent from Karnataka was vital as it considered it a 'safe state'. For the BJP, Karnataka was its launching pad in the South and a good performance in the state would help the party inch towards the majority in the Lok Sabha, it was hoping to realise.

The Janata Dal faced a major crisis during the campaign, with some leaders emphasising that the election was a referendum to the performance of the state government while others wanting the party to exclusively focus on the facilities of the central government. It must be said to the credit of the party, that its election campaign was well planned and efficiently organised. The party made an all out effort to expand its social base under the collective leadership of Deve Gowda (a vokkaliga), Hegde (a Brahmin) and Bommai (a Lingayat) with a clear projection of a second line of leadership mainly consisting of non-dominant backward castes, dalit and minority leaders. The reasonable good record of the state government—it had just completed 17 months in office—worked to the advantage of the party.

The Congress on the other hand, did not appear to have sufficiently recovered from its defeat in 1994. There also appeared to be a sense of complacency stemming from the fact that the Karnataka voter had never let down the Congress in a Lok Sabha election. The party continued to be plagued by infighting and many prominent leaders of the party who had been denied nominations decided to stay away from the campaign or even help the nominees of rival parties.

The BJP projected the 'Vajpayee's leadership' factor as its trump card. The 'hindutva slogan' was rarely heard during the initial days of the campaign but made the rounds towards the end of the campaign, largely as a belated after thought. The party was handicapped by the absence of a charismatic leader at the state level.

It is relevant to note that the post poll survey conducted by the Centre of the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) reveals that more than 72% of the respondents in Karnataka were not enthused by the election campaign and more than 80% had not attended a single campaign meeting.

TABLE 1
LOK SABHA POLL 1996 : KARNATAKA

Party	Votes Polled	Seats Won (%)	Seats Won
Janata Dal	34.9*	57.1	16
Congress	30.3	17.9	5
BJP	24.9	21.4	6
KCP	3.1	3.6	1

* The CPM an electoral ally of the JD polled as additional 0.4% of the votes.

For the first time in Karnataka, a party other than the Congress party secured a majority of the seats in a Lok Sabha elections. The percentage of votes polled and seats won by the Congress were the lowest ever polled by the party. That the Congress secured fewer seats but a higher percentage of votes as compared to the BJP needs to be viewed in the context of the nature of the electoral contest in the 28 constituencies. While the Janata Dal candidates emerged victorious in 16 constituencies, their nominees came second in as many as 6 other constituencies. Thus the party registered its presence in 23 of the 28 constituencies. While the Congress won 5 seats, its nominees came in the second position in as many as 15 constituencies, making it a principal contestant in 20 constituencies. The BJP on the other hand, won 6 seats and came second in other 6 other constituencies, making it a principal contestant in only 12 constituencies. Thus the Congress was a principal contestant in more than 70% of the seats and the BJP was in the first or second position in only a little over 40% of the constituencies.

TABLE 2
LOK SABHA POLL 1996 : KARNATAKA

Principal contestants

Principal contestant : 1st or 2nd Position	Number of Constituencies
Janata Dal - Congress	12
Janata Dal -BJP	4
Congress - Janata Dal	4
Congress -BJP	1
BJP -Congress	3
KCP -BJP	1

The margin of victories, as seen in terms of percentage of valid votes polled⁵, shows that the victory margins of the successful Congress candidates were in the less than three percentage range. This implies that all the five congress victories were by slender margins. In the case of the Janata Dal, 6 of

its 16 victories were by margins of less than three percent of the valid votes polled. These seats were crucial in ensuring that the party won a majority of the seats from the state.

TABLE 3
LOK SABHA POLL 1996 : KARNATAKA

Margin of victories (In terms of percentage of valid votes)

Margin of Victory	JD	INC	BJP	KCP
0 to 1	1	2	-	-
1 to 3	5	3	1	-
3 to 5	3	-	1	-
5 to 10	2	-	2	-
10 to 20	5	-	1	1
More than 20	-	-	1	-
	16	5	6	1

A comparative assessment of the performance of the various parties in the four regions of the state⁶ reveals interesting trends. While the Janata Dal did exceedingly well in the Old Mysore and Hyderabad - Karnataka regions it failed to register its presence in coastal Karnataka. While the Congress drew a blank in the Hyderabad -Karnataka region, the BJP registered victories in all the regions. However, the BJP's performance in the Old Mysore region was as impressive as its performance in the Coastal Karnataka and Hyderabad-Karnataka regions.

TABLE 4
LOK SABHA POLL 1996 : KARNATAKA

Region wise performance (figures in brackets are % of seats won)

Region	JD	INC	BJP	KCP	Total
Old Mysore	9(60)	3(20)	2(13)	1(7)	15
Hyderabad Karnataka	3(75)	-	1(25)	-	4
Bombay Karnataka	4(66)	1(17)	1(17)	-	6
Coastal Karnataka	-	1(34)	2(66)	-	3
	16	5	6	1	28

A majority of the candidates fielded by the Janata Dal and the BJP hailed from the dominant castes - the lingayats and vokkaligas. While the Janata Dal fielded 15 candidates from the dominant castes (8 lingayats and 7 vokkaligas), 16 of the BJP candidates hailed from dominant castes (11 lingayats and 5 vokkaligas). The Congress fielded 11 candidates from the dominant casts (4

lingayats and 7 vokkaligas). Non dominant OBC's accounted for eight of the Congress, seven of the Janata Dal and four of the BJP candidates. Of the 28 who emerged victorious 10 were from the dominant castes (5 lingayats and 5 vokkaligas). Among the other victors, four were dalits and six belonged to the non dominant obc's.

Though the dominant castes account for only 36% of the states population in the Janata Dal they accounted for half their MP's from the state -3 lingayats and 5 vokkaligas. It is significant to note all the five vokkaliga's victors who won belonged to the Janata Dal. It is also important to note the CSDS survey too reveals that a significant chunk of the dominant caste vote went to the Janata Dal (See shastri 1999a : 2446). Both the Brahmins and the remaining dominant caste victors belonged to the BJP. All the Congress victors belonged to non - Dominant, non - forward castes.

TABLE 5
LOK SABHA POLL 1996 : KARNATAKA

Caste / Community wise Composition

Caste	Seats won	% of Seats won	% of Seats pop*	JD	ING	BJP	KCP
Lingayats	5	17.9	15.3	3	-	2	-
Vokkaligas	5	17.9	10.8	5	-	-	-
Brahmins	2	7.1	3.5	-	-	2	-
Dalits	4	14.3	16.7	2	1	1	-
Idigas	2	7.1	2.3	1	-	-	1
Kurubas	1	3.6	6.3	1	-	-	-
Non Dominant	5	17.9	30.8	3	2	-	-
OBC's / others							
Jains	1	3.6	0.5	-	-	1	-
Christians	1	3.6	2.1	-	1	-	-
Muslims	2	7.1	11.7	1	1	-	-

*Based on Chinnappa Reddy Report

The 1998 lok sabha poll

The political development after that 1996 Lok Sabha poll need to be taken into account in any analysis of the 1998 verdict in Karnataka. The Janata Dal's creditable performance in Karnataka in 1996 had important national ramifications including the elevation of Deve Gowda to the position of Prime Minister. However, the suspension of Ramakrishna Hegde from the Janata Dal, within days of the Deve Gowda government winning the confidence vote totally shattered the unity, which had been so tenuously maintained since 1993. Further, the performance of the Janata Dal government in the State left much to be

desired. It has been argued that the manner in which the state government functioned and the forces that appeared to call the shots were clearly indicative of the influence and power wielded by sections of the dominant castes. This development resulted in the gradual alienation of the other non dominant backward castes, minorities and the dalits. The polarisation on caste lines ruling Janata Dal came to the force when Lallo Prasad Yadav rebelled against the national leadership of the Janata Dal (Which included Deve Gowda) and the state level non -dominant caste OBC leader used the occasion to express their displeasure at the manner in which a section from among the dominant castes appeared to control the government machinery at the state level. The clear erosion of the support for the Janata Dal was apparent from the results of the bye elections to the state assembly held between 1996 and 1998.

The formation of the Nava Nirmana Vedike and later the Lok Shakti, by Ramakrishna Hegde, triggered off further realignment of political forces. While on the one hand, it permitted the supporters of Hegde to unite under his leadership, it also provided an alternative for those who were unhappy with the internal politics of the Janata Dal.

After the 1996 poll, the Congress did make attempts to rethink its electoral strategy in the state. Though the party was relegated to the third position, in terms of votes it came second, way ahead of the BJP. The party made serious attempts to increase its support base among the OBC's and minorities, sections which appeared to have moved towards the Janata Dal (see Shastri 1999a). Leaders from among the OBCs and dalits were given prominent positions in the party, including the presidency of the KPCC and leadership of the Congress Legislature Party. However, the party was unable to capitalise on the failures of the state government. The party also found it difficult to effectively and convincingly explain its support to the United Front (Janata Dal being the main party in the front) at the centre and opposition to the Janata Dal in the state. Above all, serious infighting and absence of an effective leadership at the state level plagued the party.

Soon after the 1996 poll, the BJP attempted to consolidate on its performance in the elections. The party realised that it may have emerged as second in terms of seats, but was far behind the Congress in terms of votes. The party attempted to cash in on the apparent 'sympathy wave' after the 13 day Vajpayee government resigned. The CSDS poll in Karnataka showed that during the 1996 poll a little over 4 percent of the respondents favoured Vajpayee as Prime Minister. However, subsequent to the resignation of his 13 day government, the support for Vajpayee as Prime Minister rose to 12 percent, an increase of 8 percent, within a month. The party attempted to highlight the failures of the United Front government at the centre and the Janata Dal government in the state. The party also made serious efforts to win the support of the powerful Lingayat community, especially in Northern Karnataka. The

BJP -Lok Shakti alliance was significant in this context. The BJP felt that by aligning the Lok Shakti it could widen its support base in the state.

The 1998 elections heralded the 'true arrival' of the BJP in the South, more specifically in Karnataka. With the BJP - Lok Shakti winning 16 of the 28 seats in the states, the Congress was once again relegated to the second position with 9 seats. The Janata Dal secured the remaining 3 seats.

TABLE 6
LOK SABHA POLL 1998 : KARNATAKA

Party	Votes Polled	Seats Won (%)	Seats Won
Janata Dal	21.5	10.7	3
Congress	36.0	32.2	9
BJP	26.9	46.4	13
Lok Shakti	11.5	10.7	3

The BJP-Lok Shakti alliance benefited the BJP more than the Lok Shakti. Moreover, the success of the alliance appears to have been more due to the BJP than the Lok Shakti. 0 to 13 seats that the BJP won (it contested 18), five seats were those it previously held. Another five seats were those in which its nominees had come second in the previous poll, having lost by narrow margins. Only three seats were those where it had come third in the previous elections. All these three seats were in the Old Mysore region, where the Lok Shakti influence was limited. The BJP nominees were a principal contestant (first second) in as many as 15 of the 18 constituencies.

On the other hand, the Lok Shakti was able to win only 3 of the 10 seats it contested. Its candidates came second in five constituencies, making it a principal contestant in 8 of the 10 constituencies. Its capacity to ensure a transfer of Janata Dal votes to the Lok Shakti-BJP alliance was not clearly evident. This is apparent from the fact that in six of the seven constituencies where Lok Shakti candidates lost, the seats were earlier held by the Janata Dal and where this time around, wrested by the Congress.

While assessing the Congress performance it must be noted that though the party registered a 5 percent increase in its vote share, it was not able to regain its pre-1996 status in the state. Yet, the party registered its presence in as many as 27 of the 28 constituencies, with its candidates coming in either the first or second position. The infighting in the party was largely responsible for its defeat in several constituencies. Further, the party preferred to re-nominate many of those who were defeated in the 1996 poll. Six of those defeated in 1996 and renominated in 1998, had to taste defeat a second time around, some of them losing by wide margin.

The relegation of the Janata Dal to the third position had important

implications for state politics, especially as it was the ruling party in the state. The parties vote fell by more than 13 percentage points. The party was in the race in only 6 of the 28 constituencies, where its candidates came in the first or second position. Nine of its ten sitting MP's were defeated with one of them forfeiting the security deposit. All the four state ministers who contested the Lok Sabha elections were defeated with one of them forfeiting the deposit.

TABLE 7
LOK SABHA POLL 1998 : KARNATAKA

Principal contestant : 1 st or 2 nd Position	Number of Constituencies
BJP -Congress	12
BJP - Janta Dal	1
Lok Shakti - Congress	3
Congress -BJP	2
Congress - Lok Shakti	5
Congress - Janata Dal	2
Janata Dal - Congress	3

A region wise analysis of the electoral verdict shows that the BJP swept the polls in Coastal Karnataka and did extremely well in the Hyderabad - Karnataka and Bombay-Karnataka regions. Its performance was not as impressive in the Old Mysore region. Its electoral ally the Lok Shakti, won all its three seats in the Bombay -Karnataka region. Most of the Congress victories were in the Old Mysore region and the party drew a blank in coastal Karnataka. All the three Janata Dal victories were in the Old Mysore region.

TABLE 8
LOK SABHA 1998 : KARNATAKA

Region wise performance (figures in brackets are % of seats won)

Region	JD	INC	BJP	Lok Shakti	Total
Old Mysore	3(20)	6(40)	6(40)	-	15
Hyderabad Karnataka	-	2(50)	2(50)	-	4
Bombay Karnataka	-	1(17)	2(33)	3(50)	6
Coastal Karnataka	-	-	3(100)	-	3
	3	9	13	3	28

An analysis of the social background of the MP's elected in 1998 in Karnataka reveals that a majority of them belonged to the dominant castes - 15 of the 28 (10 lingayats and 5 vokkaligas). In the Bombay - Karnataka region, save for the one reserved seats, in all other constituencies, the victors hailed from the lingayat community. A significant number of the BJP - Lok Shakti candidates

in the Bombay - Karnataka and Hyderabad - Karnataka region hailed from the lingayat community. As the allinace did well in these regions, 6 of the 13 BJP and 3 of the Lok Shakti MP's from Karnataka hail from the lingayat community. The CSDS surveys clearly points out to the strong support that the BJP secured from the lingayat community especially in Northern Karnataka (see Shastri 199a : 2446).

TABLE 9
LOK SABHA POLL 1998 : KARNATAKA

Caste / Community wise Composition

Caste	Seats Won	% of Seats Won	% of State Pop*	JD	INC	BJP	LS
Lingayats	10	35.7	15.3	-	2	6	2
Vokkaligas	5	17.9	10.8	2	1	2	-
Brahmins	2	7.1	3.5	-	-	2	-
Dalits	4	14.3	16.7	1	1	1	1
Idigas	1	3.6	2.3	-	1	-	-
Kurubas	2	7.2	6.3	-	1	1	-
Non dominant							
OBC's / Other	2	7.2	30.8	-	2	-	-
Jains	1	3.6	0.5	-	-	1	-
Christians	-	-	2.1	-	-	-	-
Muslims	1	3.6	11.7	-	1	-	-

*Based on Chinnappa Reddy Report

The 1999 Lok Sabha and assembly Poll

In the past whenever the ruling party in Karnataka fared badly in the Lok Sabha poll, political compulsions either necessitated the dissolution of the assembly and holding of fresh elections (1971 and 1984) or resulted in mass defections to the party that emerged victorious in the Lok Sabha poll and the formation of a new government (1980). After the 1998 poll, it was anticipated that the Janata Dal fared badly, either the ruling party MLA's would join the Lok Shakti in large number resulting in the formation of an alternative government or the assembly would be dissolved resulting in fresh elections. However, no such development took place. With Hegde joining the Vajpayee Government a Cabinet Minister, the Janata Dal MLA's in Karnataka were reluctant to join the Lok Shakti in view of their reservations about who would head the alternative government. Further, the BJP was not very enthusiastic about the formation of a Lok Shakti - BJP government with the help of Janata Dal legislators crossing over to the Lok Shakti as such a government would have the Lok Shakti in the drivers seat with the BJP having to play second fiddle. Both the BJP and the Lok Shakti did not appear too keen on an early assembly elections as this may result in tensions within the allinace. Neither

party was willing to take any step that would adversely effect the stability of the BJP led government at the Centre. With the state assembly elections due in a year, both parties felt the status quo would be in their best interest.

Sitting in the opposition (both in centre and in the state), the Congress saw itself as the 'natural choice' of the electorate in the coming assembly elections. In order to graner the support of the dominant castes, an influential leader from one of these castes was made the KPCC President. Leaders from the other dominant caste and those from backward communities were appointed to important position in order to balance the social equations. Two developments need to be noted in this context. First, the Congress admitted to its fold several Janata Dal leaders who had joined Hegde's non - political organisation, the Nava Nirmana Vedike. This caused a sense of unease among 'loyalist' Congress workers. Secondly, internal difference among party leaders continued to surface from time to time.

The Lok Shakti had done little to consolidate its base in the state. With Hegde joining the Union Cabinet, his interest in state politics appear to wane. In view of his ambivalent stand on returning to state politics on the one hand his continued allinace with the BJP on the other, many of his supporters decided to join the Congress party.

The ruling Janata Dal continued with its lacklustre performance. Difference between Deve Gowda and Chief Minister Patel surfaced from time to time. Frustrated by the increased interference in the state administration by Deve Gowda's supporters, the Chief Minister appeared to lose interest in administration and was merely waiting for the term of the assembly to come to an end.

The split in the ruling Janata Dal on the eve of the 1999 elections was a development of immense political significance. The realignment of political forces was a natural corollary to this development. The split in Janata Dal was the end result of a process that began with the expulsion of Hegde from the party. It need to be borne in mind that in 1996, Hegde played a major role in ensuring that Patel became the Chief Minister of the State. Deve Gowda had favoured the candidature of Siddaramaiah who had to finally remain content with the Deputy Chief Ministers position. Patel had for many years now, been considered a Hegde loyalist. The blatant interference in the administration by the supporters of Deve Gowda and the inability of the Chief Minister to arrest this trend, the anointing of Siddaramaiah as Chief Minister in waiting should the party be returned to power, were all developments which were indicative to the increase tension between Deve Gowda and Patel. With the formal split in the Janata Dal, the group led by Chief Minister Patel - the Janata Dal (U) - decided to align with the Lok Shakti and support the National Democratic Alliance. There was an intense and stromy debate both within the BJP and Lok

Shakti on the emerging alliance in the state. The State level BJP leaders were against the new alliance. Ananth Kumar, a prominent BJP leader from Karnataka, and Vajpayee endorsed the development and termed the new entrant as an 'asset' to the NDA (*Times of India 10 August 1999*). Heeding the advice of the national leadership of the party, the State BJP leadership too, decided to support the alliance, in spite of their reservations. Karnataka was thus moving towards a tri-polar contest in the 1999 poll - Congress, BJP-Janata Dal (U) alliance and Janata Dal (S).

However, the fragility of the BJP - Janata Dal (U) alliance was obvious from the day it was forged. Differences between the alliance partners surfaced at regular intervals and no serious efforts was made to iron out the differences. The problem become even more complex in Karnataka, with simultaneous elections to both the State Assembly. The internal contradictions in the NDA alliance were clearly apparent in the Sate Assembly poll. The NDA was not able to reach an agreement on seat sharing and as a result in several of the Assembly constituencies more than one partner in the NDA had put up a candidate. Of the 224 Constituencies in Karnataka, the BJP was to put up candidates in 129 and the Janata Dal (U) in 95. In reality the BJP put up the candidates in 149 constituencies and the Janata Dal (U) in 112, resulting in the both the BJP and Janata Dal (U) candidates remaining in the fary in as many as 37 constituencies. The problem was less acute in the case of the Lok Sabha poll, wherein the conflict was over sharing of one of the 28 seats.

TABLE 10
LOK SABHA AND ASSEMBLY POLL 1999 : KARNATAKA

Party	% of votes Polled (LS)	% of seats won (LS)	No. of Seats won (LS)	% of votes polled (Assembly)	% of seats won (Assembly)	No. of Seats won (Assembly)
INC	45.4	64.28	18	41.04	58.93	132
BJP	26.9	25.00	7	20.66	19.64	44
JD(U)	12.3	10.72	3	13.61	8.04	18
JD(S)		-	-	10.44	4.46	10

The elections results saw the Congresss securing a clear majority in the Assembly and winning a majority of the Lok Sabha seats from the State. The election result marked a clear rejection of the BJP - Janata Dal (U). The third force - Janata Dal (S) , was once again, rejected by the voters. Soon after the poll results came trickling in, the State BJP leadership claimed that the party had lost due to the tie up and the results were a verdict against the Patel government (*Deccan Herald October 1999*).

The election results clearly indicate the Congress had succeeded in recovering much of the ground it had lost over the last decade. As compared to the previous Lok Sabha elections, the party registered a 9 percentage point

increase in its vote's share. If the 1994 Assembly elections were to be taken into account, the Congress votes registered a significant increase of over 18 percentage points. The party won a majority of the assembly seats in all the districts of the State, save Bidar. The party was a principal contestant in 197 of the 224 constituencies (88 % of the constituencies) winning 132 seats and coming second in 65 other constituencies.

While the BJP - Janata Dal (U) alliance failed to secure the endorsement of the electorate, its performance merits attention. First, the Assembly elections. While the BJP tally in the assembly has increased by 4 seats (it had won 40 seats in 1994), it was a principal contestant in as many as 99 constituencies (it won 44 and came second in 55). In 1994, the BJP was a principal contestant in only 64 constituencies. This time around, it contested only 149 seats and was a principal contestant in 99 of them (66%). If the alliance were to be taken into account, the alliance was principal contestant in as many as 167 of the 224 constituencies (75%). With the Janata Dal (S) being a principal contestant in only 39 constituencies (came first in 10 and second in 29) it is clear that the main contestant was between the Congress and the BJP - Janata Dal(U) alliance. If the Lok Sabha election results in Karnataka were to be analysed, the Congress was a principal contestant in all the 28 constituencies (coming first in 18 and second in 10). The BJP - Janata Dal (U) alliance candidates were a principal contestant in 26 of the 28 constituencies (won 10 seats and secured the second position in 16). The Janata Dal (S) was a principal contestant in only 2 seats, where its candidates came second. The trend of bi -polar electoral competition in the state has been confirmed the 1999 electoral verdict.

TABLE 11
MOVEMENT OF VOTES 1998 TO 1999 : KARNATAKA
(figures in percentage)

	INC	BJP +	JD(S)
INC	81	16	2
BJP +	27	69	3
JD	24	49	22

The CSDS post poll survey provides sufficient indicators for the cause of the Congress victory and the defeat of the alliance. While the Congress was able to retain more than 80 % of the votes it polled in 1998, the BJP alliance was able to retain less than 70 % of its original vote, losing more than 25 % of its to the Congress. Most significantly, the Janata Dal (U) was able to secure for the alliance, only 50 % of the Janata Dal vote of 1998, and 24 % of the Janata Dal vote of 1998 moved to the Congress and is the key to explaining its success (Yadav et. al 1999: 47). The sharp fall in the poll by the third force is significant in this regard. In 1998, the Janata Dal polled 21.5 % of the votes. In

the Janata Dal (S) polled less than 11% of the votes. The percentage of votes polled by the BJP and its allies remained largely unchanged across the election⁷. The decline in the vote percentage of the third force is directly proportionate to the increase in the voter proportion of the Congress.

The Congress victory is also linked to the social coalition it was able to build up. The CSDS post poll survey reveals that the Congress was able to secure the support of significant sections from among the non - dominant OBC's, minorities, dalits and a section of the dominant castes - the Vokkaligas. A substantial segment of the other dominant caste - the Lingayats, continued to support the BJP alliance, but the alliance was not able to repeat the 1998 performance in spite of the support of crucial segment of the dominant castes because it failed to retain the non -dominant OBC's votes.

TABLE 12
1999 POLL : KARNATAKA - VOTING BY CASTE / COMMUNITY

	INC	BJP+	JD(S)
Upper Caste	36	49	10
Vokkaliga	41	41	21
Lingayat	39	55	4
Non Dominant OBC's	47	37	10
Dalit	57	35	10
Tribal	39	50	10
Muslim	86	12	2

The frequent turnover of seats across elections is yet another trend noticed in Karnataka. This 'increased volatility' in terms of hold over seats reflects the inability of parties to retain a seat in successive elections. If the Assembly elections results in Karnataka in 1994 and 1999 were to be compared, it is noticed that the Congress, which won 38 seats in 1994, conceded 7 of these seats (20 %) to other parties in 1999 and wrested 101 seats from other parties. The same as true of the BJP. Of the 40 seats it won in 1994, it lost as many as 19 and was able to retain only 21 (just over 50%). Its tally reached 44 (4 more than last time) because it wrested 23 seats from other parties.

The decade of the 90's has witnessed major changes in electoral politics in Karnataka. The rise of the BJP, the decline and revival of the Congress, increased voter and seat 'volatility' and above all the emergence of a bi-polar competition in the state are the trends clearly evident.

References

Cheluva Raju, K.H., R.L.M. Patil, Sandeep Shartri, M.J.Vinod. 1993. *Karnataka Assembly Elections : A post Election Survey*, Bangalore University.

Government of Karnataka. 1977. *25 years of Elections in Karnataka 1952 - 77*. Bangalore : DPAR.

Government of Karnataka . 1983. *Election Statistics of General Elections 1983*. Bangalore : DPAR.

Government of Karnataka . 1985. *Election Statistics of General Elections 1985*. Bangalore : DPAR.

Government of Karnataka . 1993. *Election Statistics of General Elections 1989*. Bangalore : DPAR.

Government of Karnataka 1994. *10th Karnataka Legislative Assembly Details Results*. Bangalore : DPAR.

Government of Karnataka . 1996. *Election Statistics of General Elections 1996*. Bangalore : DPAR.

Government of Karnataka . 1998. *Election Statistics of General Elections 1998*. Bangalore : DPAR.

Government of Karnataka . 1999. *Election Statistics of General Elections 1999*. Bangalore : DPAR.

Shastri, Sandeep. 1995. *Towards Explaining the Voters Mandate : An analysis of the Karnataka Assembly Elections 1994*. Bangalore : Vinayaka.

-----, 1999a . Emergence of Bi - Polar Alliance System in Karnataka. *Economic and Political weekly* 34:34-35:2440-48.

-----, 1999b, Beyond Vital Statistics. *Deccan Herald* 22, October.

Yadav, Yogendra, Anthony Heath, Sanjay Kumar with Sandeep Shastri. 1999. Congress dominates in all regions. *Frontline*. 19:46-48.

Foot Notes

1. This paper is a revised and updated version of my paper published earlier titled 'Emergence of Bi-Polar Alliance System in Karnataka Economic and Political Weekly, 34:34-35:2440-48. I would like to thank Dr. Yogendra Yadav and Dr. Suhas Palshikar for their useful comments on a earlier draft and to the centre for the Study of developing Societies, Delhi for their help in analysing the National Election Studies Survey Data.
2. The 1985 Assembly elections is not being taken into account as the previous Assembly lasted for only two years.
3. Two surveys conducted during the 1999 elections point to interesting trends :
(a) A survey on political attitudes and preference of the Karnataka voter conducted by the author reveal that more than 54% of the respondents were not at all satisfied with the performance of the Janata Dal government in the State.

b) A DRS poll on performance rating of State governments found that 61% of the respondents (in Karnataka) were dissatisfied with the State government's performance.

4. It is the authors contention that the success of the BJP/Lok Shakti alliance in the 1998 elections was largely due to the BJP with the Loka Shakti playing in minimal role (see Shastri 1999a : 2444-45).
5. The margin of victory has been calculated in terms of percentage of valid votes polled in the view of that fact that there are wide variations in the number of valid votes polled from constituency to constituency.
6. For the purpose of analysis four regions in the state have been indentified : a) Old Madras, b) Hyderabad-Karnataka ; c) Bombay-Karnataka and d) Coastal Karnataka.
7. In 1998 it was 38.4 % and in 1991 it was 39.2 %. This implies that with the Janata Dal (U) addition the vote share increased by only 0.8%.