

Emergence of 'Third Force'

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A significant aspect of the 1994 assembly elections in Karnataka was that they revealed the emergence, for the first time, of a competitive party system in the state. Ever since 1972, assembly elections had witnessed a contest involving two major political parties. The third force – which was represented by a different formation in each election – had failed to register its presence save marginally in 1983. Nevertheless, even though the BJP emerged as the principal opposition party in the assembly in 1994 the overall performance of the Congress was, relatively, much better. The surprise of the elections, however, was the victory of the Janata Dal.

THE results of the assembly elections held in Karnataka in November/December 1994 were a demonstration of the fact that no ruling party can take the electorate for granted and then hope to be voted back to power. This paper analyses these elections from a multi-track perspective. The major inferences that can be drawn from the results are first assessed. The political implications of the electoral verdict in Karnataka are then examined.

I Election Results

The 1994 elections in Karnataka saw the Janata Dal securing a slender majority in the legislative assembly. It was only the third occasion in the history of the state assembly elections that the Congress Party did not secure a majority of the seats. Earlier, in the 1983 assembly elections no party secured a majority and the Janata Party emerged as the single largest party, and in 1985 the Janata Party emerged as the majority party.

A comparative analysis of the seats won by the different political parties and independents in the 1989 and 1994 elections shows that while the Janata Dal witnessed nearly a five-fold and the BJP a ten-fold increase in seats, the share of the Congress fell by 80 per cent. There was a marginal increase in the number of seats won by independents.

VOTES AND SEATS

Further, there was a wide discrepancy between the percentage of votes polled and seats won by various parties. Table 2 shows that even though the Janata Dal secured a little over 33 per cent of the votes, it won 52 per cent of the seats. The Congress, on the other hand, secured a little over 27 per cent of the votes but won only 16 per cent of the seats. Similarly, the KCP polled a little over 7 per cent of the votes and secured a little over 4 per cent of the seats. The discrepancy between the votes polled and seats secured was not very glaring in the case of the BJP (17 and 18 per cent respectively).

One of the inherent limitations of the first-past-the-post electoral system, especially when it operates in a multi-party democracy, is that the votes polled by a political party are in most cases not reflected in the seats it is able to win. India's electoral politics during the last four decades – both at the national and the state level – is witness to the trend that the party that secures a majority and forms the government after a general election invariably secures less than 50 per cent of the votes polled [Shastri 1992:7; 1994:390-94].

In the last 10 general elections to the Karnataka assembly, save on three occasions, the party that formed the government did so on the basis of a minority vote [Shastri and Vinod 1990:27]. Even on those occasions (1957, 1962, 1972) when the party secured more than 50 per cent of the votes polled, there was a wide gulf between the percentage of the votes polled and the seats won.

One of the factors that were responsible for the discrepancy between the percentage of votes polled and seats won by political parties was the multi-cornered contests witnessed in all the constituencies. The 1994 assembly elections in Karnataka saw a record 2,497 contestants entering the electoral fray – more than 11 contestants per constituency. Interestingly, the number of party-sponsored candidates was marginally higher than that of the independents.

The sharp increase in the number of party-sponsored candidates in the 1994 elections was largely due to the fact that four parties – Janata Dal, Congress, BJP and KCP – fielded candidates in nearly all the constituencies. Further, the KRRS fielded candidates in nearly half of the constituencies (111) and the BSP in 78 of them (Table 3). The sharp increase in the number of contestants also resulted in a larger number of victorious candidates securing less than 50 per cent of the valid votes.

In the 1994 Karnataka elections, 176 (79 per cent) of the 224 elected MLAs polled less than 50 per cent of the valid votes. This was due to the split of votes among several contestants. A partywise analysis shows that 78 (68 per cent) of the 115 Janata Dal

MLAs polled less than 50 per cent of the votes. In the case of the Congress Party, 32 (89 per cent) of the MLAs polled a similar percentage of votes. Among the 40 BJP MLAs, 34 (85 per cent), and of the 10 KCP MLAs, 9 (90 per cent) secured less than 50 per cent of the valid votes. It can be seen in Table 4 that among those in the 'Others' category, none polled more than 50 per cent of the votes. It is also noticed that a higher percentage of non-Janata Dal MLAs secured less than a majority of the votes.

The phenomenon of a large number of successful contestants securing less than 50 per cent of the valid votes is closely linked to the discrepancy between the percentage of votes polled and seats won by parties. In the event of a higher percentage of victorious candidates securing less than a majority of the valid votes, the discrepancy becomes even more pronounced.

In the context of this discrepancy, especially in the case of the ruling party, there is an urgent need to have a 'second look' at the first-past-the post-system. Several suggestions have been made in this regard. These include the 'partial list system' – modelled on the German electoral system – as suggested by the Tarkunde Committee (1978), 'negative vote system' (Kant 1992), 'binary voting' (Indiresan 1991:296) and 'second ballot system' (Shastri 1992:19). A serious debate needs to be initiated in the country on the need to search for alternatives to the first-past-the post election system with a view to ensuring that the preferences of the voter are more effectively mirrored in the composition of the legislatures.

PRINCIPAL CONTESTANTS

Partywise performance can also be examined from the perspective of the leading contestants (first and second) in each constituency. Table 5 provides the details with regard to the principal contestants in the 224 constituencies. Table 5 shows that in only 168 of the 224 constituencies (75 per cent) were the first and second positions occupied by the Janata Dal, Congress or BJP contestants. In 56 constituencies (25 per

cent), a candidate who was an independent or hailed from a party other than the Janata Dal, Congress and BJP was either in the first or in the second position. This clearly indicates that the 1994 elections witnessed electoral contests involving not merely the three major parties – Janata Dal, Congress and BJP, they have heralded a phase of genuine multi-party contests. It needs to be stressed that in the 1989 assembly election, the Congress candidates were winners or immediate losers in all but 15 constituencies [Shastri and Vinod 1991:391]. The 1994 election has altered that trend and the present ruling party (Janata Dal) was in the first or the second position in only 163 (73 per cent) constituencies (victorious in 115 and in the second position in 48).

The Congress, whose candidates emerged victorious in 36 constituencies, came second in as many as 122 constituencies. The party was thus a principal contestant in 158 (70 per cent) constituencies. The BJP, which emerged victorious in 40 constituencies, was in the second place in only 24 others. It was thus a principal contestant in only 64 (29 per cent) constituencies. This implies that the BJP candidates were neither in the first nor in the second position in as many as 180 (81 per cent) constituencies. Though the BJP may be the leading opposition party in the assembly and the Congress may have been relegated to the third position, an overall assessment of the performance of the parties shows that the Congress fared much better than the BJP. That as many as 134 BJP contestants forfeited their deposits while only 34 Congress contestants lost theirs bears testimony to this fact. Further, there was not much of a discrepancy between the percentage of votes polled and seats won in the case of the BJP as the party had a significant presence in only 64 constituencies. In this context, it is interesting to note that some BJP leaders and party workers took the stand (both before and after the elections) that the party fielded candidates in 223 constituencies, even though it was fully aware that many of these candidates stood no chance of winning, only with a view to registering their presence in the constituency.¹ When asked to react to the fact that most of the national leaders of the BJP had declared before the elections that the party would form the next government in the state (*Deccan Herald*, November 6, 1994; *The Hindu*, November 8, 1994), they asserted that such statements were inevitable in the course of an election campaign.

In the case of the KCP, its candidates were victorious in 10 constituencies and came second in 17 others, thus registering their presence in only 27 (12 per cent) constituencies. As many as 184 of the 219 KCP candidates (84 per cent) lost their deposits.

Of the 111 KRRS contestants, as many as 100 (90 per cent) forfeited their deposits. All

TABLE 1: SEATS CONTESTED AND WON BY PARTIES AND INDEPENDENTS

Party	Seats Won in 1994 Elections (Seats Contested)	Seats Won in 1989 Elections	Increase/Decrease
1	2	3	4
Janata Dal	115 (221)	24	+91
Congress	36 (223)	178	Δ142
BJP	40 (223)	4	+36
KCP*	10 (219)	-	+10
KRRS	1 (111)	2	Δ1
BSP	1 (78)	-	+1
AIADMK	1 (4)	1	-
BRP*	1 (4)	-	+1
INL*	1 (2)	-	+1
CPM	1 (12)	-	+1
KCVF*	1 (45)	-	+1
CPI	0 (8)	-	-
IUML	0 (2)	1	-1
SP*	0 (48)	-	-
RPI	0 (11)	-	-
RPI (K)	0 (4)	-	-
Janata Party	0 (36)	2	Δ2
Other parties	0 (6)	-	-
Independents	16 (1240)	12	+2

Notes: BJP: Bharatiya Janata Party; KCP: Karnataka Congress Party; KRRS: Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha; BSP: Bahujan Samaj Party; AIADMK: All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam; BRP: Bharatiya Republican Party; INL: Indian National League; CPI(M): Communist Party of India (Marxist); CPI: Communist Party of India; IUML: Indian Union Muslim League; SP: Samajvadi Party; RPI: Republican Party of India; RPI(K): Republican Party of India (Khobargade).

* These parties did not exist during the 1989 elections.

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF VOTES POLLED AND SEATS WON BY PARTIES AND INDEPENDENTS

Party	Votes Polled	Per Cent of Votes Polled	Seats Won	Per Cent of Seats Won
Janata Dal	69,35,136	33.49	115	52.04
Congress	56,60,218	27.34	36	16.14
BJP	35,14,250	16.97	40	17.86
KCP	15,06,849	7.28	10	4.46
KRRS	5,86,832	2.83	1	0.45
BSP	1,60,720	0.78	1	0.45
CPM	91,279	0.44	1	0.45
SP	74,454	0.36	-	-
INL	60,802	0.29	1	0.45
CPI	51,793	0.25	-	-
AIADMK	43,378	0.21	1	0.45
KCVF	37,632	0.18	1	0.45
BRP	28,132	0.14	1	0.45
Janata Party	34,895	0.17	-	-
RPI	2,743	0.01	-	-
RPI(K)	1,854	0.01	-	-
IUML	811	0.01	-	-
Other parties	4,301	0.01	-	-
Independents	19,09,866	9.23	16	7.13

TABLE 3: TOTAL NUMBER OF CONTESTANTS (PARTY-SPONSORED AND INDEPENDENTS)

Year of Election	Total	Party-Sponsored	Independents
1994	2497	1257 (50.3)	1240 (49.7)
1989	2043	966 (47.3)	1077 (52.7)
1985	1795	607 (33.8)	1188 (66.2)
1983	1356	613 (45.2)	743 (54.8)
1978	1165	680 (58.4)	485 (41.6)
1972	820	572 (69.8)	248 (30.2)
1967	727	397 (54.6)	330 (45.4)
1962	675	500 (74.1)	175 (25.9)
1957	560	322 (57.5)	238 (42.5)
1952	394	241 (61.2)	153 (38.8)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages.

that one of the 78 BSP nominees (the BSP registered one victory in the state), seven of the eight CPI nominees, 10 of the 12 CPM nominees (one CPM contestant emerged victorious), three of the four BRP nominees (one BRP contestant emerged victorious), 44 of the 45 KCVP nominees (one KCVP contestant emerged victorious), two of the four AIADMK nominees (one AIADMK contestant emerged victorious) and 47 of the 48 Samajvadi Party nominees lost their security deposits. All the RPI, RPI(K), Janata Party and IUML candidates forfeited their deposits. The high incidence of deposit-losing candidates among those sponsored by political parties clearly shows that parties put up candidates in constituencies even when it was obvious that their electoral prospects were bleak. In other words, in several constituencies candidates were fielded merely for the sake of registering a formal contest. The defeat of a high percentage of independents – 1,203 (97 per cent) out of 1,240 – implies that most of the independents were non-serious candidates.

It is interesting to note that 18 sitting MLAs who had once again sought the mandate of the voters (from the same constituencies) forfeited their deposits: 14 of them were Congress nominees, two contested the election on the KCP ticket and two as independents (one was a Congress rebel).

SWING OF VOTES

A crucial factor that helps explain voting behaviour is the swing of votes for and against a political party in each constituency over successive general elections. The swing of votes in favour of and against a party from the 1989 to the 1994 assembly elections in Karnataka (Table 6) has been assessed below.

In the 1994 assembly elections there was a swing in favour of the Janata Dal candidates in as many as 137 of the 223 constituencies (one constituency² is not being considered as the party did not field a candidate here both in 1989 and 1994). In 79 of these constituencies, the swing was more than 10 per cent and in 58 it was between 0.01 per cent and 10 per cent. Further, in 103 of these 137 constituencies, the Janata Dal candidates emerged victorious. There were 34 constituencies where, in spite of a vote swing in favour of the Janata Dal, its candidates did not win the seat. In 88 of these 137 constituencies the Janata Dal candidates wrested the seat from the Congress. In seven (held earlier by the Congress but won in these elections by Janata Dal), the swing of votes which ensured these victories varied from 0.04 per cent to 1.82 per cent and in terms of votes was 4,704. Thus a swing of 4,704 votes in favour of the Janata Dal candidates in seven constituencies helped the Janata Dal

to gain these seats and secure a majority in the assembly.

In 88 other constituencies there was a fall in the percentage of votes polled by the Janata Dal candidates in 1994 as compared to the 1989 elections. In 70 of these, the Janata Dal candidates were defeated and in the other 16, they emerged victorious. In as many as 40 of these 88 constituencies, the fall in the Janata Dal vote was more than 10 per cent. In nine such constituencies the Congress retained the seat, in another 10 the seat was wrested by the BJP from the Congress, in four the KCP wrested the seat from the Congress, and in three the seats were wrested by the BJP from the Janata Dal itself.

In the case of the Congress, there was an increase in the percentage of the votes polled by the party candidates in 24 constituencies while it fell in as many as 200 others. In 15 of the 24 constituencies where the party registered an increase in votes, the swing in favour of the Congress was in the 0.01 per cent to 10 per cent range. In only seven of these constituencies did the Congress candidates emerge victorious.

Of the 200 constituencies where the percentage of votes polled by the Congress candidates fell, in 130 the swing against the Congress was more than 15 per cent. 147 of these 200 seats were earlier held by the Congress but were lost in these elections. In 25 other constituencies the party retained the seat.

As for the BJP, of the 223 constituencies (one constituency³ is not being considered as the party did not field a candidate from this constituency in both 1989 and 1994), the percentage of votes polled by the party increased in all but one constituency. Only in Bidar (which was won by the BJP in 1989 and Bahujan Samaj Party in 1994) did the percentage of votes polled by the BJP witness a decline.

Several factors need to be borne in mind while seeking explanations for a rise in the percentage of BJP votes in 222 constituencies. In the first place, the party had put up candidates in only 119 constituencies in the 1989 elections. In 1994, it fielded candidates in 223 constituencies. Thus, in the 104 constituencies where the BJP did not field a candidate in 1989, however small may be the percentage of votes polled by its nominees, it indicates a swing in favour of the party.

Of the 222 constituencies where there was a swing of votes for the BJP, in 114 the swing was less than 10 per cent and in 108 it was more than 10 per cent. Of these 108 seats, in 35 the BJP contestants emerged victorious and in 36 the Janata Dal wrested the seat from the Congress. And of the 114 constituencies mentioned earlier, 61 were wrested by the Janata Dal from the Congress.

HOLD ON CONSTITUENCIES

In the 1989 assembly elections, the Congress had won 178 seats, the Janata Dal 24, the Janata Party (JP) two, the BJP four, the KRRS two, AIADMK one, and 13 constituencies had returned independents. Later in a by-election, the Congress Party lost one of its seats to the Samajvadi Janata Party.

Of the 177 seats held by the Congress, it was able to retain 28 and lost 149. The party wrested eight other seats from other parties. The Janata Dal retained 15 of its seats, losing nine and wresting 100 from other parties. The BJP retained three of its seats, lost one and wrested 37. The KCP – which did not exist in 1989 – won 10 seats. It is noticed from Table 7 that in all only 52 seats (23 per cent) were retained by the parties and 172 (77 per cent) were lost/wrested. This implies a high

TABLE 5: PRINCIPAL CONTESTANTS IN KARNATAKA ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, 1994

Principal Contestants (First and Second Position)		No of Constituencies
Janata Dal	- Congress	109
Janata Dal	- BJP	30
Congress	- BJP	29
Janata Dal	- KCP	6
Janata Dal	- KRRS	3
Janata Dal	- Independents	15
Congress	- KCP	8
Congress	- Independents	7
Congress	- KCVP	1
Congress	- AIADMK	1
Congress	- KRRS	1
Congress	- CPM	1
Congress	- SP	1
BJP	- KCP	3
BJP	- Independents	2
BJP	- BSP	1
BJP	- INL	1
KCP	- Independents	2
KRRS	- Independents	2
BRP	- AIADMK	1
Independents	- Independents	2
		224

TABLE 4: PERCENTAGE OF VOTES POLLED BY WINNING CANDIDATES

	JD	Congress	BJP	KCP	Others*	Total
Secured more than 50 per cent of valid votes	37	4	6	1	0	48
Secured less than 50 per cent of valid votes	78	32	34	9	23	176
	115	36	40	10	23	224

Note: *Others include AIADMK: 1, BRP: 1, BSP: 1, KRRS: 1, INL: 1, KCVP: 1, CPM: 1, Independents: 16.

turnover of parties and candidates and reflects a weak hold of parties over constituencies.

A factor of related significance is the defeat of a large number of sitting MLAs in the 1995 elections. In the ninth Karnataka legislative assembly (elected in 1989), of the 224 seats six were vacant due to death/resignation. Of the 218 sitting MLAs, 181 (83 per cent) contested the elections. Of these 10 contested as independents, including six Congress rebels. Out of the 181 who entered the electoral fray, only 52 (29 per cent) were re-elected and as many as 129 (71 per cent) were defeated (Table 8).

Of the 130 sitting MLAs who contested the election on the Congress Party ticket, only 26 (20 per cent) were elected and 104 (80 per cent) were defeated. Even in the case of the Janata Dal, of the 22 sitting MLAs who contested as many as seven (32 per cent) were defeated and only 15 (68 per cent) were re-elected. As for the BJP, one (25 per cent) of the four sitting MLAs who contested the election was defeated. Similarly, as many as eight (80 per cent) of the 10 sitting KCP MLAs who contested the election were defeated. The high percentage of defeat of the sitting MLAs, irrespective of the party they belonged to, is indicative of the fact that there was a general feeling of discontent amongst the voters with regard to the performance of these MLAs.

Further, it is also noticed that political compulsions force political parties to renominate a high percentage of sitting MLAs to contest the elections. The BJP and KCP renominated all the sitting MLAs. In the case of the Janata Dal, only one of the sitting MLAs volunteered to keep out of the electoral fray. Even the Congress Party renominated nearly 77 per cent of its sitting MLAs.

REGIONWISE PERFORMANCE

Traditionally, Karnataka has remained divided into four regions: Old Mysore, Hyderabad-Karnatak, Bombay-Karnatak, and Madras Presidency and Coorg. Prior to independence and the reorganisation of the states on linguistic basis, the Old Mysore region was a part of the princely state of Mysore, Hyderabad-Karnatak that of the Nizam territory, and Bombay-Karnatak and the Madras Presidency were in the British India.

While there are 110 assembly constituencies in the Old Mysore region, there are 39 in the Hyderabad-Karnatak region, 57 in the Bombay-Karnatak region and 18 in the Madras Presidency and Coorg. An analysis of the partywise performance shows (Table 9) that there are clearly discernible trends in each region. While the Janata Dal victories in the Old Mysore region (57 per cent) and the Bombay-Karnatak region (54 per cent) were more than its overall state average (51 per cent), the party did not do as well in the

Hyderabad-Karnatak region (48 per cent) and fared very badly in the Madras Presidency region and Coorg (17 per cent).

In the case of the Congress, the percentage of victories in the Old Mysore region (9 per cent) was significantly lower than in the Hyderabad-Karnatak region (25 per cent), Madras Presidency region and Coorg (22 per cent) and Bombay-Karnatak region (21 per cent). The poor performance in the Old Mysore region reduced the overall percentage of seats won by the Congress to 16.

While the BJP recorded a significantly high percentage of victories in the Madras Presidency region and Coorg (56 per cent), its percentage in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region (8 per cent) and Bombay-Karnataka region (14 per cent) was relatively poor.

MARGIN OF VICTORIES

The margin of victories in the 224 constituencies is assessed in terms of its percentage to the total valid votes polled.⁴ From Table 10 it becomes clear that 161 of the 224 (71 per cent) victories were recorded by margins of more than 5 per cent of the valid votes polled. In the case of the Janata Dal, 71 (61 per cent) of the 115 victories were by margins of more than 10 per cent while in that of the Congress, 25 (69 per cent) of its 36 victories were by margins of less than 10 per cent. In the case of the BJP, the victories were more or less evenly distributed in the less or more than 10 per cent range. All the parties which have one MLA in the house recorded victory margins of less than 15 per cent. Thus, the Janata Dal had a much greater number of victories in the more than 10 per cent range as compared to the other parties and independents.

SOCIAL GROUPS

Caste and community considerations have been a critical factor in Indian, particularly

electoral politics. Karnataka's electoral politics is no exception. Such considerations have often played a significant role both in the choice of candidates and in the electoral outcome here. In the 1994 elections too all parties gave due weightage to the caste factor. In Karnataka, the lingayats and vokkaligas are considered the traditionally dominant castes. The caste composition of the newly elected legislature confirms this dominance.

Lingayats, who constitute nearly 15 per cent of the state population, were elected from 64 constituencies, thus making up nearly 29 per cent of the new house. In the previous elections, 60 lingayats had been elected. Partywise, there are 33 lingayats in the Janata Dal (29 per cent of its legislators), 15 in the Congress (42 per cent), 11 in the BJP (28 per cent) and five among the other parties and independents.

Vokkaligas (nearly 11 per cent of the state population) were elected from 54 constituencies, constituting a little over 24 per cent of the new house. In the previous assembly, there were 42 vokkaligas. Overall,

TABLE 7: SEATS WRESTED, RETAINED AND LOST BY POLITICAL PARTIES AND INDEPENDENTS

Party	Wrested	Retained	Lost
Janata Dal	100	15	9
Congress	8	28	149
BJP	37	3	1
KCP	10	0	0
AIADMK	1	0	1
KRRS	1	0	2
INL	1	0	0
BRP	1	0	0
BSP	1	0	0
CPM	1	0	0
KCVF	1	0	0
Samajvadi Party	0	0	1
IUML	0	0	1
Janata Party (JP)	0	0	2
Independents	10	6	6
	172	52	172
	224		224

TABLE 6: SWING OF VOTES: ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, 1989 TO 1994

Percentage of Swing	Number of Constituencies		
	Janata Dal	Congress	BJP
More than -30	7	25	-
-30 to -20	6	60	-
-20 to -15	14	50	-
-15 to -10	13	36	1
-10 to -5	18	17	-
-5 to 0	28	12	-
0 to 5	32	12	67
5 to 10	26	3	47
10 to 15	20	4	40
15 to 20	16	3	23
20 to 30	17	1	21
More than 30	26	1	24
	223*	224	223**

Notes: * In one constituency the Janata Dal did not put up a candidate in both the 1989 and 1994 elections.

** In one constituency the BJP did not put up a candidate in both the 1989 and 1994 elections.

there are 31 vokkaligas in the Janata Dal (27 per cent of its legislators), nine in the Congress (25 per cent), seven in the BJP (18 per cent) and seven in the other parties and independents. The lingayats and vokkaligas who together form a little over 26 per cent of the state population now constitute more than 52 per cent of the new assembly. These two dominant castes make up 56 per cent of the Janata Dal and 67 per cent of the Congress legislators.

The share of other caste/community groups in the total number of seats, with the exception of brahmins, marathas and bunts, was less than their share in the state population as may be seen from Table 11.

II

Voting Pattern and Electoral Trends: An Assessment

The 1994 assembly elections clearly reveal the emergence of a competitive party system in Karnataka. The fact that the Janata Dal and the Congress Party shared between them the first and the second position in only 100 constituencies indicates that in more than half the constituencies a non-Janata Dal/non-Congress candidate was in the first or second place. The trend in earlier assembly elections was distinctly different. Prior to 1972, the non-Congress parties were all splinter groups and failed to register any significant presence in the assembly elections. However, after 1972 all assembly elections witnessed an electoral contest involving two major political parties. The 'third force' - which was the Congress (R) in 1978, the BJP in 1983 and 1985 and the Janata Party in 1989 - failed to register its presence save in 1983 [for details see Patil and Shastri 1994:248-49].

The importance of the 1994 Karnataka assembly elections and the electoral verdict needs to be assessed in the backdrop of the political developments in the state during the five years preceding the elections. In the 1989 assembly elections, the Congress Party won 176 of the 222 seats for which elections were held, securing in the process a three-fourths majority. Never before had any ruling party in Karnataka secured such a high percentage of seats. The new Congress government began well under the chief ministership of Veerendra Patil. However, within a year Patil was unceremoniously removed from the office on the dictates of the party 'high command'. Bangarappa succeeded Patil and soon dissident activity began in the party. The steam-roller majority which the Congress had secured in the assembly became one of causes for the tension as a greater number of ruling party legislators had to be provided 'political accommodation'. The chief ministership once again changed hands and Veerappa Moily came to occupy the post. Moily - who was

TABLE 8: PERFORMANCE OF SITTING MLAs

Party	Sitting MLAs Renominated to Contest	Sitting MLAs Who Did Not Contest	Elected	Defeated
Congress	130*	33	26	104
Janata Dal	22	1	15	7
BJP	4	0	3	1
KCP	10	0	2	8
MES	1	3	1	0
KRRS	2	0	0	2
Samajvadi Party	1	0	0	1
AIADMK	1	0	0	1
Independents	10	0	5	5
	181	37	52	129

Note: * This includes independents who were made associate members of the party and contested on the party ticket.

TABLE 9: REGIONWISE PARTY PERFORMANCE

Region (Total Seats in Region in Brackets)	Seats Won				
	Janata	Cong	BJP	KCP	Others
Old Mysore (110)	63 (57)	10 (9)	19 (17)	4 (4)	14 (13)
Hyderabad-Karnatak (39)	18 (46)	10 (25)	3 (8)	3 (8)	5 (13)
Bombay-Karnatak (57)	31 (54)	12 (21)	8 (14)	2 (4)	4 (7)
Madras Presidency and Coorg (18)	3 (17)	4 (22)	10 (56)	1 (5)	-
Total	115 (51)	36 (16)	40 (18)	10 (4)	23 (11)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages to total seats in region.

TABLE 10: MARGIN OF VICTORIES
(Percentage of Total Valid Votes)

Per centage	JD	Cong	BJP	KCP	AI-ADMK	BRP	BSP	CPM	INL	KRRS	KCVP	IND	Total
0-1	6	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	12
1-3	10	8	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	27
3-5	12	4	3	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	24
5-10	16	12	7	3	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	4	44
10-15	13	4	12	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	33
20-30	19	2	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	31
More than 30	20	4	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	32
	19	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	21
	115	36	40	10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	16	224

TABLE 11: PERFORMANCE OF VARIOUS COMMUNITIES AND CASTES

Caste/Community	Seats Won	Percentage of Seats Won	Percentage of State Population*
Lingayats	64	28.57	15.34
Vokkaligas	54	24.11	10.81
SC	35	15.63	16.72
ST	6	2.68	6.73
Brahmins	10	4.46	3.46
Muslims	6	2.68	11.67
Kurubas	10	4.46	6.28
Marathas	9	4.02	2.98
Edigas	4	1.79	2.31
Christians	0	-	2.08
Bunts	8	3.57	0.75
Kodavas	2	0.89	0.75
Others	16	7.14	20.66
	224	100	

Note: * Based on the figures in the Chinappa Reddy Commission Report.

dissident during Banagarappa's chief ministership – had a taste of his own medicine when, even before he could settle down in office, dissident activity once again surfaced. Through all these developments, the Congress high command adopted a policy of wait and see and refused to intervene even when basic norms of parliamentary governance were thrown to the winds. All this resulted in the lacklustre performance of the government. The flip-flop policy with regard to admissions to professional colleges, the reservation policy fiasco, Hubli Idgah maidan controversy and the anti-Urdu bulletin agitation, all tarnished the image of the party and were responsible for its defeat.

Mention must be made of the campaign speeches of the Congress president and prime minister, P V Narasimha Rao. Appealing to the electorate to vote for the Congress, he stressed that a vote against the Congress would be detrimental to the progress of the state (*Indian Express*, November 14, 1994). Such an appeal distorts the very basis of parliamentary governance. Stretching the prime minister's logic, it could be argued that in the next Lok Sabha elections the voters should keep in mind who is in power in the state while deciding who should form the government at the centre!

The electoral performance of the BJP was assessed in an earlier section. A deeper analysis of the election results shows that even though the BJP emerged as the principal opposition party in the assembly, the overall performance of the Congress Party was much better than that of the BJP. Clearly, the BJP's performance was not as spectacular or creditable as the final electoral outcome projects. Incidentally, in the local bodies elections held in March 1995 the BJP was relegated to the third position, way behind the Congress.

Throughout the election campaign, the BJP leaders had unequivocally stressed that in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections from Karnataka, it had emerged as the second largest party – winning four of the 28 Lok Sabha seats from the state and securing 29 per cent of the votes – and that the 1994 assembly elections would see the party further consolidating its position. While the BJP did improve upon its 1989 assembly elections performance, its share of votes fell considerably in 1994 as compared to the 1991 Lok Sabha elections. After the assembly results began trickling in, the party leadership adopted the stand that it was wrong to compare the parties' performance in the assembly elections and the Lok Sabha elections. Such a stand could be commended (much of India's federal tensions could be eased if assembly election outcomes were not linked to Lok Sabha election results and vice versa⁵) if only the party had been consistent in its approach to the issue.

It is also to be noticed that 35 of the 40 BJP victories were in urban and semi-urban pockets. Its appeal was more pronounced in the areas where the benefits of development have reached the people. Further, the election manifesto of the BJP, while underplaying the Hubli Idgah incident,⁶ attempted to project the party as a clean, efficient and honest alternative to both the Congress and the Janata Dal.

The emergence of the Janata Dal as the majority party in the assembly took many political observers by surprise. The party – which barely managed to win 24 seats in the 1989 assembly elections and did not win a single seat from Karnataka in the 1991 Lok Sabha poll⁷ – was hardly expected to stage such a dramatic comeback. Several commentators have attributed the Janata Dal

victory to the anti-Congress wave or the incumbency syndrome. However, a leading Janata Dal activist⁸ has asserted that the Janata Dal victory should not be explained away in terms of an anti-Congress vote. In Karnataka, even if it were to be assumed that the voters were unhappy with the performance of the Congress government, they had the option of voting for either the BJP or the Janata Dal. The fact that the Janata Dal secured a majority was indicative of the positive choice of the voters.

It must be said to the credit of the Janata Dal that the ground work for a spirited election campaign had been laid well before the announcement of the elections with the joint tour of the state by Ramakrishna Hegde, S R Bommai and Deve Gowda. During the



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election campaign, they made it a point to emphasise party unity and apologise to the voters for the disunity shown in the past. Bommai's statement that the election verdict was a "victory for collective leadership and a committed cadre" (*The Times of India*, December 10, 1994) bears testimony to this fact.

Further, the Janata Dal victory in Karnataka, as also in Bihar, needs to be seen as a vote for the local leadership, unmindful of the developments in the party at the national level. In Karnataka, the Janata Dal was hardly affected by the political convulsions experienced in the party at the national level in recent times. The state Janata Dal leaders distanced themselves from the developments in the party at the national level. The emergence of the Janata Dal as, what may be called, a federal party is seen by many as a welcome trend.

The caste factor has played a crucial role both in influencing the electoral verdict and the political developments in the state after the elections. The Janata Dal leadership troika, who spearheaded the campaign, Hegde, Bommai and Deve Gowda, helped ensure that the dominant caste votes went in favour of the Janata Dal. The second line of leadership in the party was drawn from those who hailed from the backward communities, dalits and minorities. In the 1989 assembly elections, Congress candidates had emerged victorious in 32 of the 35 reserved constituencies. In 1994, the Congress was able to retain only two of these seats and the Janata Dal candidates emerged victorious in 25 reserved constituencies. This trend is also indicative of the fact that the voting pattern in the reserved constituencies is not much different from that of the general constituencies, especially in view of the nature of the electorate in the reserved constituencies.

The impact of the caste/community factor is also seen in the composition of the Janata Dal ministry. Communitywise, in the council of ministers there are nine lingayats, seven vokkaligas, six from the scheduled castes, nine from the other backward communities, three Muslims, one from the scheduled tribes, one kodava and one brahmin. Vokkaligas and lingayats account for nearly half the ministers, as in the case of the Janata Dal legislators in assembly. The castewise composition of the council of ministers is more or less reflective of the castewise composition of the Janata Dal in the assembly [detailed assessment in Shastri 1995: 59-64].

Studies have attempted to divide the portfolios allotted to ministers into core, development and welfare categories⁹ (Rao 1979:151). Viewed from the caste perspective, of the five vokkaliga cabinet ministers as many as four handle the core portfolios and only one handles a development portfolio. Of the five lingayat

cabinet ministers, four handle development portfolios and one a core portfolio. Of the five ministers who hail from the scheduled castes, three have been given welfare portfolios and only one each a core and a development portfolio. Five of the six cabinet ministers who belong to the other backward communities have been given core portfolios while one has been given a development portfolio. The lone Muslim cabinet minister has been given a core portfolio, and the cabinet minister who hails from the brahmin community has also been given a core portfolio.

In the final analysis, it must be stressed that in the past the electorate in Karnataka, even when they gave a clear mandate to a non-Congress Party to form the government in the state, have voted in favour of the Congress in the Lok Sabha elections. In the December 1984 Lok Sabha elections, when the state had a Janata government, the voters elected 24 Congress candidates and only four Janata nominees. However, within four months – in March 1985 – the same voters gave a clear mandate to the Janata Party to form the government in the state. Even in the 1994 assembly elections, the performance of the central government was never taken seriously (by the voters) as an election issue, even though the Congress Party manifesto concentrated more on the performance of the central government and as a belated afterthought made a passing reference to the achievements of the state government. The electoral verdict in the 1994 assembly elections in Karnataka was essentially dictated by local issues and developments.

Notes

- 1 BJP leaders and workers in interviews with the author.
- 2 Davangere constituency.
- 3 Gurmalkal constituency.
- 4 The reason for employing this approach is that the size of electorate and the percentage of voter turnout vary significantly from constituency to constituency.
- 5 Often in the past, when a ruling party in a state did not win a majority of the Lok Sabha seats (from the state), the resignation of the state government was demanded. In 1977, eight Congress-ruled state governments and in 1980 seven Janata/Akali Dal governments were dismissed (on the above ground) invoking the provisions of article 356.
- 6 While the Idgah issue was not mentioned in the election manifesto of the BJP, frequent reference to it was made as part of the election campaign, especially in communally sensitive areas.
- 7 While Deve Gowda was elected from Hassan, he had contested on the ticket of the Janata Party.
- 8 B K Chandrashekar, former Janata Dal MLC, during a discussion with the author.
- 9 The classification made by Rao (1979) has been suitably modified and used.

Core ministries: Home, finance, revenue, agriculture, commerce and industry, law and parliamentary affairs, education and energy.

Development ministries: Panchayat raj, planning, irrigation, forests, co-operation, marketing and fisheries, food and civil supplies, municipal administration, transport.

Welfare ministries: Harijan welfare, social welfare, tribal welfare, women welfare, health, rehabilitation, labour.

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