

BJD-BJP Coalition Government and Trend of 2014 Elections in Odisha

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Abstract – The electoral out-come in the state in the year 2014 has been analysed and it is found that anti-incumbency factor could hardly divert the mandate. The Congress could not win even a seat in the Parliamentary elections in the state where as the mandate could be swayed in its favour registering win in its name by the ruling party for the fourth consecutive term. Anti-incumbency factors as well as the surge of Narendra Modi's popularity could not stop BJD headed by Naveen Patnaik in winning 117 out of 147 Assembly seats, on the other hand, BJP won 10 seats and Congress won 16 seats there by showing poor performance on the electoral stage, where as in 2000 election BJD-BJP coalition won 106 Assembly seats out of 147. The credit went to transparency in the policies of the BJD Government. This also provided that the people of Odisha found Naveen Patnaik as their unanimous leader and BJD as the most favourable party.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Coalition Government of Orissa had been seen in the years of 1959, 1967, 1971, 2000, and 2004. In all the coalition governments the Regional Political Parties had their prominent role. In 1997 Biju Janata Dal (BJD) came into existence as a Regional Party. BJD aligned with BJP in 1998 and BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik became coalition partner of BJP lead NDA Government at the centre. That trend of coalition was continued until 2004 Assembly Elections of Orissa. All the regional political parties of Orissa could not be able to form Government with absolute majority before 2009 Assembly Elections. But 2009 Assembly elections were a turning point from which mandate reflected in favour of BJD and the chief of BJD became Chief Minister consecutively. Naveen Patnaik took steps for social welfare and his action against corruption and corrupt leaders and clean image became his vote bank.

2. OBJECTIVES:

1. To find out nature of BJD and BJP coalition Government.
2. To find out political stability of BJD's Government after 2009 elections.
3. To find out the overwhelming support of voters to the Regional Party and rejection of the National Parties in Orissa.

3. ORISSA ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, 2000:

Elections to the 12th Orissa Legislative Assembly were held in two phases in February 2000. In the elections, as many as 1, 42, 87,543 voters exercised their franchise to elect 147 members of Assembly. And as many as 868 candidates had entered the fray of which 236 were Independents while the Congress did not make an electoral understanding with any party. It contested in 145 seats, the Biju Janata Dal and Bharatiya Janata Party continued to align themselves to fight against the ruling Congress Party as before. Thus, while BJD contested in 84 seats, the BJP fielded its candidates in 63 constituencies while the JMM contested 21 seats, the BSP fielded its candidates in 105 Assembly seats.

Taking advantage of the anti-incumbency factor, the Biju Janata Dal – Bharatiya Janata Party combine had managed to gain absolute majority in the 12th Orissa Assembly by securing 106 out of 147 seats. The alliance's combined vote share was 47.7 percent. The Congress(I) which was in Government dropped 5.3 percentage points in its vote share which translated to a net loss of 54 seats. This left it with a total of just 26 seats as compared to 80 seats it had won in the 1995 elections. The BJD has put a superlative show and triumphed in 68 seats; the BJP in turn had failed to match its ally's success and retained candidates in

38 of the 63 constituencies where it had entered the race.

On the other hand, the Congress had emerged victorious in only 26 of the 145 seats it had put up its nominees. While eight Independents had won, the rest of the seats had been shared by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-3, CPI-1, Janata Dal, (secular)-1 and All India Trinamool Congress-1.

TABLE-1

THE 12TH ORISSA ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, 2000

Sl. No.	Name of the Party	No. of seats Won	% of votes secured
1	INC	26	32.94
2	BJD	68	29.27
3	BJP	38	17.99
4	JMM	3	2.11
5	CPI	1	1.19
6	CPI-M	1	0.76
7	Janata (S)	1	0.83
8	Trinamool Congress	1	0.77
9	BSP	0	1.10
10	Janata (U)	0	0.34
11	Samajwadi Party	0	0.14
12	Shiv Sena	0	0.12
13	Independents & others	8	12.44
	TOTAL	147	100.00

Thus, the Congress Party had to suffer a swing of 5.3 percent, and the BJD 5.9 but the BJP gained 10.3 percent swing in favour of it in the Assembly polls. The Congress Party, which was in power, drew blank in 15 districts and 18 of the 30 member Council of Ministers led by Hemananda Biswal had been made to bite the dust. Prominent Congress leaders including former Chief Minister and Orissa Pradesh Congress Committee president J.B. Patanaik, Urban Development Minister Bhupinder Singh, Higher Education Minister Matlub Ali, Energy Minister Niranjan Patnaik, Revenue Minister Jagannath Patnaik, Water Resources Minister Basant Kumar Biswal, Finance Minister Bhagabat Prasad Mohanty, and Works Minister Jayadev Jena had suffered defeats. The Chief Minister Hemananda Biswal tendered his resignation to the Governor M.M. Rajendran following the debacle of his party in the election. Thus, the Orissa Assembly election marked the emergence of an anti-Congress coalition with a long gap of 28 years. After the announcement of results, the BJD-BJP combination was set to wrest power from the Congress Party in the State. Hence given the infighting in the Congress (I) and party's poor record of governance, the BJD-BJP alliance virtually coasted to power without any serious challenge.⁽¹⁾

After Naveen Patnaik was elected as the leader of the BJD Legislature Party, Governor M.M. Rajendran invited him to form the new Government. The 25 member BJD-BJP Ministry was sworn in on March 5, the birth anniversary of Biju Patnaik, the late Janata Dal leader and father of Naveen Patnaik. However, Naveen Patnaik refused to appoint a Deputy Chief Minister from the BJP possibly to avoid a power

struggle in the future.⁽²⁾ While distributing the portfolios, he retained 16 berths for his party and gave the BJP the remaining nine. The three-tier Council of Ministers comprises 15 Cabinet Ministers, 6 Ministers of State with independent charge, and 4 Ministers of State. Ten cabinet Ministers including the Chief Minister belong to the BJD and five to the BJP. While each of the allies has three Ministers of State with Independent charge, the BJD has three Ministers of State and the BJP only one. Thus, Naveen Patnaik tried to distribute the portfolios deftly between the two allies of the Government according to their perceived strength to avoid any possible contradiction in the ruling coalition government. The BJD-BJP coalition government ruled the state in two terms from 2000-2004 and 2004 to 2009. The BJP and BJD were bound with each other having separate agenda. BJP party of Odisha unit was dependant on BJD and Chief Minister Naveen Patanaik.

4. 2009 ELECTIONS IN ODISHA:

The coalition of BJD-BJP was broke just before 2009 Assembly elections due to Kandhamal riot. Naveen Patnaik tried to fight the elections for gaining magic numbers taking the help of small players like NCP, Left Parties and others. Naveen Patnaik rode a election Tsunami to wash away the Congress and BJP in 2009 Assembly elections. The BJD won 103 Assembly and 14 Lok Sabha seats. The Congress won 27 seats, BJP won only 06 seats, NCP won 4 seats, CPI won 01 seat and the Independent candidates won 06 seats in Assembly elections of Odisha.

5. GAIN AND LOSS AFTER BJD-BJP SPLIT IN 2009 ELECTIONS:

In 2009 Assembly elections Naveen Patnaik won from Hinjili Constituency by defeating Raghav Parida of Congress. BJD ally NCP won three Assembly seats. It was loss for BJD as speaker Kishore Mohanty was defeated from Jharsuguda Constituency. The BJD chariot had cut many Congress and BJP heavy weight on its way. The BJP minister Biswabhusan Harichandan, the state BJP President Suresh Pujari, similarly Congress heavy weight Nalini Kanta Mohanty, P.C.C President Jaydev Jena, Niranjan Patnaik, Lalatendu Bidyadhara Mohapatra, Soumya Ranjan Patnaik were defeated. BJP Lok Sabha candidates Juel Oram and Kharabel Swain were defeated in Sundargarh and Balasore constituency respectively.

6. 2014 ELECTIONS IN ODISHA:

The Electoral outcome of 2014 Election both for Assembly and Parliament elections in Odisha witness a sharp indicator of electoral choices and voting behaviour of the electorates of Odisha. The ruling BJD unfolded an electoral history through its

landslide victory in both Assembly and Parliament election and retained power in the state for the fourth consecutive term. The Congress failed to open its account in Parliamentary election in Odisha. Narendra Modi wave which swept throughout the nation could not be able to gain much ground in Odisha. The BJD under the leadership of Naveen Patnaik did not allow the Modi wave to influence the voters' choices in the state.

Odisha witnessed a just different verdict clearly against anti-incumbency; a clear sweep in favour of the ruling BJD. The verdict of the electorates of Odisha in the 2014 General and Assembly Elections, unlike in several other states has come much of a surprise. The oldest and national party Congress faced a great electoral debacle by not being able to open its account in parliamentary election in Odisha. The BJD won 20 out of 21 Lok Sabha seats leaving just one seat for BJP. Against anti-incumbency in Assembly Elections, the BJD had a landslide victory by winning 117 seats out of the 147 Vidhan Sabha seats. The Congress won 16 seats securing second position and the BJP remained in the third position by winning only 10 seats in the Assembly elections.

7. TRENDS OF 2014 ELECTIONS IN ODISHA:

The nature of verdict in Odisha in 2014 elections is described as both historical and a miracle. First, it is a history because for the first the country's oldest party failed to open its account in Lok Sabha Election in Odisha. It is a miracle because Naveen swept the polls fighting against the Modi wave and anti-incumbency factor. Some of the factors are ascribed to his historical and miracle event of 2014 elections in Odisha.

A. Impact of General Factors on Voters:

The reasons attributing to electoral debacle of Congress party in the state are party indiscipline, infighting within state unit leaders, national level corruption image and the BJD blaming Congress led UPA neglecting the state's interest. The BJP which had a nation-wide Modi wave failed to gain more seats because of its state unit leaders who instead of improving their positions totally banked on the Modi wave. A fall in Congress vote share directly benefited BJD elsewhere in the state and more clearly BJP consolidating its vote share in western and eastern regions. The BJD had led comfortably in western Odisha and had loss contest with BJP in coastal region. The BJP in the state narrowly missed the chance of desired electoral success due to less organizational effort at the state level. Besides these factors the young and new voters voted in favour of Naveen Patnaik and his party to give it a landslide victory. The Left Parties and other regional outfits also could not be able to divide BJD's vote and shared a voting percentage of only 3 percent in

total. The fact that BJD retained power in Odisha for the fourth time with massive mandate is remarkable. Surprisingly, it fared quite well in comparison to last 2009 election in Lok Sabha as well as Assembly poll. Different reasons are attributed to describe BJD's electoral success.

B. Factor of Good Governance:

The voters in Odisha are highly satisfied with performance of the ruling BJD Government and have greatly benefited from various welfare schemes launched by the State Government. It had made a great impact on the voting behaviour of the people. Naveen Patnaik government had increased various schemes and policies for the beneficiaries in his third and fourth term of chiefministership. Besides providing rice at Rs. 1 per kg, the State Government has also become successful in improving health care facilities in the state by implementing '108 ambulance' for easy and accessible medical care for the people. In education sector too, the state government also brought policies to help the poor and the needy students like laptop to meritorious students, cycle to girl students which greatly influenced the poor voters towards the government. Besides, the ruling BJD captured the attention of the poor farmers and kendu leaf pickers through offering benefits to them. Thus the voters supported the ruling BJD Government and rejected the National parties.

C. Credible and efficient leadership of Naveen Patnaik influencing voters' choice:

Efficient and credible leadership of the BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik has influenced the voters in the state. Naveen's leadership has been accepted better even than the former Chief Minister J. B. Patnaik and the former union minister Srikanta Jena. Naveen removed the people who could pose problems to his government. Naveen has better handled the situations of political crisis and turmoil than anyone else. He has been the Chief Minister for last 14 years while Odisha has seen at least four Chief Ministers in the previous 15 years. The pre poll data further reveals that 58 percent of the voters wanted Naveen as Chief Minister for the fourth consecutive term in the state.

D. Social base of Political Parties:

So far as the question of its social base is concerned, it suffers from a dualistic approach. On the one hand, it originated in anti-Congressism that is, it evolved as a party of middle class/ caste, especially the three upper castes Brahmin, Karna and Khandayat. No doubt, the party organisation is dominated by the middle caste but it claims to be a broad-based, mass political body dedicated to the aggregation and articulation of the interests of a cross-section of the society. Nevertheless, over the years the social base of the party has grown

attracting a large number of the OBCs, SCs, STs, minorities and women. Thus the BJP's social and regional support base complements the BJD's social base. The BJD is stronger in the largest and most developed region of the coastal Orissa and draws support from all sections of society in a way typical of regional parties. In short, the social base of the BJD has definitely been enlarged. Though caste and class factor is a major determinant of voting behaviour but these cleavages do not matter much in electoral politics of Odisha. BJD's social base is very similar to that of the BJP elsewhere- the upper castes and OBCs support the party overwhelmingly. It also receives support from Dalits and Adivasis. Ruling BJD enjoys a broad based social support across different communities and social sections. In Urban areas, the BJP put up a challenge to the BJD, where as in rural areas its fight was mainly with the Congress

E. BJD's Old Propaganda: neglect of the interest of the state by Congress Government at the Center did well.

The BJD applied its popular slogan by convincing the voters that the Congress-led Central Government has discriminated the state in allocation of funds and therefore they are demanding special status for the state. The voters' choice also clearly reflects strong opposition of Odisha against fiscal discrimination of the centre. The verdict of the electorates of Odisha in 2014 election is clearly a vote against Congress and public resentment against centre's discrimination of the state in allocation of funds. The mandate was against centre coercion and neglect of the interest of the state.

F. Competition among political parties in the State.

The 2014 Election result has exposed the nature of competition among different political parties in the state. The Congress party with a 6 percent decline in vote share is the major loser in terms of numbers of seats in Assembly and a total loss of seats for Lok Sabha poll. The BJP which gained much in terms of vote share could not win in terms of seats. Thus, the 2014 election result has redefined the nature of competition among different political parties, the principal opposition getting weakened and the regional party getting stronger and stronger by protecting interest of the state against federal discrimination.

G. Value based politics and Programmes of Biju Janata Dal:

The Biju Janata Dal was harping on value based politics in its critical approach to ruling Congress. The role of leadership in mobilizing masses towards fulfillment of national goals through electoral process can be a matter of detailed study. BJD has secular and democratic outlook, and it has always taken a

firm and unequivocal stand against communal forces. The Party believes in continuously working towards the upliftment of weaker sections of society and fighting against social injustice. The party has always stood for, supported and advocated in favour of women, youths, farmers, labourers, workers' unions (Labour unions), religious minorities, and the weaker/backward sections of the society. It is committed to ensure provisions of food, shelter and clothing to the common men at affordable and sustainable prices. Odisha has witnessed unprecedented growth and development in the last decade under the stewardship of its upright, committed and dynamic Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik. It has always been top on the agenda of the party, since its inception, to fight against corruption in public life manifested by the Congress party, and the deliberate and willful neglect of the state by the former Congress led UPA Government at the Centre.

H. Expected voters turnout despite Naxal threatening and criminals risk :

Anti-poll posters by Maoists have surfaced in the Southern and Western parts of Odisha, leaving local voters worried that they will not be able to conduct peaceful Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the Naxal-hit region. Many posters were found in the interior regions of Odisha. Ignoring the *threat* from 'Red' rebels and braving the scorching heat, voters turned out touching the normal 74.78 in the elections of 2014. It almost appears that the voters' attachment to their votes remains undiminished and that the ordinary citizens are convinced that democratic elections hold the final key to their having any power in the political system. The electoral choice in this election has been rather ambivalent. It was a clear rejection of the Congress and its leaders particularly Jayadev Jena who was the President of Pradesh Congress Committee.

8. CONCLUSION:

The ruling Biju Janata Dal still had people's reliance in its favour as it could say people's mandate in the 2014 Elections to Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly. The provincial 'satrap' Sri Naveen Patanaik has been accepted as the unanimous and unparalleled leader by the people of Odisha. In spite of federal fiscal discrimination by the centre the ruling BJD could win massive electoral success in the state owing to the Naveen Patanaik's deliberate governance and administration as well as his apt leadership and absence of trust worthy alternative. Though BJP 'supremo' Narendra Modi's popularity throughout the country benefitted the victorious candidates in 2014 elections but it could not have much effect in case of Odisha.

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