

# One saffron, four outliers

Barring Karnataka, the BJP has been halted by a different political vehicle in each of the southern States

SANDEEP SHASTRI

The 2019 Lok Sabha election results in the south present an interesting contrast to the rest of the country. Apart from Karnataka, where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) decimated the Congress-Janata Dal (Secular) alliance, the south has withstood the efforts of the BJP to increase its national footprint. Yet, developments indicate that the BJP has gained ground elsewhere in the south too. It is now in close competition with the Congress as the key competitor to the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) in Telangana. In Kerala, the BJP was unable to make a dent in the bipolar contest between the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Left Democratic Front (LDF). In Tamil Nadu, the winner-takes-all trend was repeated by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)-led alliance. Andhra Pradesh is a direct fight between two State-based parties; the two national parties are out of the competition.



"The DMK alliance's victory shows that DMK supporters recognise M.K. Stalin as the true inheritor of his father's legacy." Supporters of the party celebrate in Chennai after the alliance's victory in the Lok Sabha election. —AFP

propelled the BJP nominees to victory. Second, the failure of the Congress and the JD(S) to unite at the ground level cost them dearly. Third, the intense infighting and factionalism within both the Congress and the JD(S) also contributed to the defeat of their candidates.

In Telangana, it was expected that the TRS would repeat its impressive performance in the 2018 Assembly polls, but the voters gave the party a less celebratory victory. The BJP emerged with four seats and the Congress won three. Thus, the tussle in the State is now for the second position. Over time, as the BJP attempts to enlarge its footprint in south India, it will look towards Telangana.

Andhra Pradesh witnessed simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and State Assembly. The trend in the Assembly poll has been replicated in the Lok Sabha verdict. The victory of Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSR Congress Party is both a triumph of his 18-month tour of the State and a vote against the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government. The two national parties have been sidelined for different reasons. The Congress has virtually been replaced by the YSR Congress, its own splinter group. The BJP's break with the TDP cost it dearly and has pushed it to the sidelines.

Kerala has traditionally seen a face-off between the Congress-led UDF and the Communist Party of In-

dia (Marxist)-led LDF. Vote share differences between the alliances are just a few percentage points. This time, the UDF got more seats. The LDF faced anger for its stand on the Supreme Court judgment on Sabarimala. The Congress had skillfully appropriated the BJP's stand on the issue. The BJP was thus not able to benefit from the unhappiness with the way the LDF State government handled the issue. Kerala is likely to see this bipolar alliance competition for some more time.

## A crucial election

Tamil Nadu witnessed its first election after the two stalwarts of its main parties, M. Karunanidhi and Jayalalitha, passed away. The victory achieved by the M.K. Stalin-led DMK alliance showed that DMK supporters recognise him as the true inheritor of his father's legacy. It is unclear who is seen as the political heir of Jayalalitha as the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) is divided and its government in the State is unpopular. The AIADMK alliance and government seem to have the BJP in the driver's seat. The drubbing the alliance received in this election is indicative of the public mood in the State.

The most critical question for the near future will be whether the rest of the southern States will follow the Karnataka pattern or States like Tamil Nadu and Kerala will continue to throw up political competition that is rooted in State-specific socio-cultural and historical factors. The five articles on the south by the State coordinators of Lokniti provide detailed empirical proof of the electoral trends in these States and explain the people's verdict. The BJP has been halted by a different political vehicle in each of the four southern States where the party has found much less acceptance compared to other parts of the country.

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## How castes and communities voted in Karnataka

	Cong-JD(S) (%)	BJP (%)	Others (%)
Upper Castes	31	63	6
Vokkaligas	33	60	7
Lingayats	10	87	3
Other OBCs	46	47	7
Dalits	49	42	9
Adivasis	36	54	10
Muslims	73	18	9
Others	36	55	9

## Attracting young voters

	Cong-JD(S) (%)	BJP (%)	Others (%)
Up to 25 years	37	56	7
26-35 years	42	48	10
36-45 years	41	51	7
46-55 years	38	57	5
56 years & above	48	48	4

# Heading towards political uncertainty

The BJP's victory in Karnataka could impact the State government's stability



VEENADEVI & NAGESH K.L.

Karnataka provided the only southern comfort for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It was the only State in south India that followed the national trend of endorsing a second term for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance. The scale of the victory that the BJP achieved in the face of a Congress-Janata Dal (Secular) alliance was truly spectacular. Never before has the BJP achieved such a high strike rate in the State. Nor has Karnataka seen a victory of such a big scale in the competitive party system which has existed in the State since the 1980s. By winning all but three seats, the BJP swept all regions of the State. The Congress and the JD(S) were left clutching on to one seat each, and an independent backed by the BJP completed the Karnataka contingent.

## Reasons for the BJP's surge

What explains the surge of the BJP in Karnataka? First, the CSDS-Lokniti post-poll data indicate that the level of satisfaction with the Central government was reasonably high. Close to three-fourths of the respondents said they were satisfied with the BJP-led government's performance at the Centre. As opposed to this, only two-thirds said they were satisfied with the Congress-JD(S) government's performance in the State.

Second, the Modi factor appears to have played a key role. More than half the respondents in the State hoped that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be re-elected. He led Congress president Rahul Gandhi by over 20 percentage points. More importantly, over half of those who voted for the BJP said that they would not have voted for the party if Mr. Modi had not been its prime ministerial candidate. This explains why all 27 BJP candidates sought votes in Mr. Modi's name.

Third, the Congress-JD(S) alliance stitched by the leadership did not really work on the ground, whether among party cadres or party supporters, especially in the old Mysore region of Bengaluru and southern Karnataka. In this Vokkaliga heartland, the traditional fight has been between the Congress and the JD(S). In this election, by fighting together, the two parties opened up the space for the BJP to emerge. The post-poll data indicate that six out of every 10 Vokkaliga votes went this time to the BJP. In the recent past, this Vokkaliga vote was divided among the three players. With two of them joining hands, the BJP thus became the beneficiary of those Vokkaliga votes which were not in favour of the alliance. Commentators had suggested that the combined vote share of the Congress and the JD(S) would trump the BJP. This did not work as political developments since the last election have swayed the mood in favour of the BJP. The belief that the alliance came together to merely deny the BJP a chance to come to power may well have caused sympathy among a segment of voters in favour of the BJP. Further, at the constituency level, the rivalry between the cadres of the Congress and the JD(S) led to a lacklustre campaign. Within both the Con-

gress and the JD(S) there was unhappiness with the choice of candidates. All the infighting within these parties could also explain their collective poor performance.

Fourth, in northern Karnataka, the BJP ensured a consolidation of the Lingayat, upper caste and non-dominant Other Backward Classes (OBC) vote in its favour. Post-poll survey data indicate that close to nine of every 10 Lingayat voters endorsed the BJP, and the party was able to do well both among the non-dominant OBCs and the Dalits. The Hyderabad-Karnataka region was considered a strong base of the Congress. Its prominent national leader, Mallikarjun Kharge, who has never lost an election was defeated this time.

Finally, the Congress-JD(S) alliance failed to present the voters with a positive agenda. This explains why it could not garner the support of younger voters, the educated segments of society, and those who have high exposure to the media. Among these sections, the BJP secured a much higher percentage of votes. The defeat of prominent leaders of the alliance including Mr. Kharge, JD(S) patriarch Deve Gowda, former Congress Union Ministers Veerappa Moily and K.H. Muniyappa, and Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy's son Nikhil Gowda indicate the intensity of the sweep of the BJP.

## Impact of the result

This election result might directly impact the stability of the alliance government in the State. It is only a matter of time before the blame game for the election defeat is out in the open. The Congress will need to deal with factionalism within the party.

Meanwhile, the BJP must be on the horns of a dilemma. It would



## The Modi factor

	2014 LS (%)	2019 LS (%)
BJP voters who would not have voted for BJP had Modi not been PM candidate (all India)	27	32
BJP voters who would not have voted for BJP had Modi not been PM candidate (Karnataka)	57	54

like to go in for a mid-term poll if the government were to fall. Yet, given the fact that the House has barely completed a year, there could be stiff resistance from the sitting MLAs who may not be keen to go back to the voters to seek a fresh mandate. The State is clearly heading towards a phase of political uncertainty.

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# When schemes translate into votes

The BJP was able to attract more women voters compared to 2014

VIBHA ATTRI & ANURAG JAIN

The 2019 Lok Sabha election saw not only the highest number of women candidates contesting (724), but also the highest number of women winners (78). For the first time in India's electoral history, the voter turnout for men and women was almost equal — 66.79% and 66.68%, respectively.

## The gender disadvantage

Previous National Election Studies show that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has traditionally received less support from female voters than male voters. Despite the BJP's spectacular victory in this election, the party continues to have a gender disadvantage of three percentage points among women voters at an all-India level. The Congress, a party that is traditionally favoured by women, was supported by more or less an equal percentage of men and women, and so were the Bahujan Samaj Party and its allies and the Left.

The gender disadvantage for the BJP was not uniform across the country, however. Among the Hindi heartland States, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan saw the highest gender disadvantage for the party, where the gap between men and women was seven and five percentage points respectively. However, in Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Haryana, the party saw more women voting for it. In Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the number of women and men voting for the party was the same.

## Social profile

The Congress support base among women was more or less balanced across all social groups, except among the upper castes, Muslims and Adivasis. On the other hand, the BJP enjoys much higher support among young women voters as well as upper caste, educated and rich women voters. Across most social groups, more men voted for the BJP than women from the same group. This was not the case with Congress voters, where gender-wise support for the party across different social groups was more balanced.

A higher proportion of men wanted to give the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance another chance as compared to women. The preference for Narendra Modi as Prime Minister was five percentage points

## How men & women voted this time (%)

	Congress	Congress allies	BJP	BJP allies	BSP+	Left	Others
Women	20	7	36	7	6	2	22
Men	19	7	39	7	7	2	20

## Support for BJP among Hindi heartland States (%)

	Voted for BJP			Gap between men and women
	Men	Women		
Bihar	27	26		1
Chhattisgarh	29	38		-9
Delhi	46	42		4
Haryana	58	60		-2
Himachal Pradesh	74	74		0
Jharkhand	45	44		1
Madhya Pradesh	54	47		7
Rajasthan	58	53		5
Uttarakhand	71	72		-1
Uttar Pradesh	46	46		0

## Social profile of Cong. and BJP voters by gender (%)

	Congress		BJP	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Rural	19	19	36	38
Urban	21	21	37	41
Poor	17	17	34	38
Lower class	21	21	35	36
Middle class	22	20	37	39
Rich	20	20	43	45
Non-literate	20	21	34	35
Up to primary	20	21	33	37
Up to matric	21	20	36	39
College and above	18	18	41	42
Dalits	20	20	32	35
Adivasis	30	32	41	46
OBCs	16	15	43	44
Upper Castes	12	12	50	55
Muslims	33	32	8	8
18-25 years	20	19	40	41
26-35 years	19	19	38	40
36-45 years	20	20	36	39
46-55 years	20	20	35	36
56 years & above	19	19	32	37
Average	20	19	36	39

## More women are voting for the BJP (%)

	Congress			BJP		
	Men	Women	Gap between men and women	Men	Women	Gap between men and women
2014	19	19	0	33	29	+4
2019	19	20	-1	39	36	+3

higher for men compared to women. While 44% women preferred to see him as Prime Minister, 49% men wanted to see him leading the country.

Although the overall gender disadvantage for the BJP persists (i.e., less

support among women than among men), the disadvantage is less compared to what it was in 2014. Back then, 29% of women had opted for the party. This rose to 36% this election. The gap between men and women voters who voted for the BJP was



## Shift among party voters (%)

	Women	Men
Voted for Cong in 2014 but BJP in 2019	11	12
Voted for BJP in 2014 but Cong in 2019	7	7
Voted Cong in 2014 and 2019	67	68
Voted BJP in 2014 and 2019	71	71

seen a marginal decline from four percentage points in 2014 to three percentage points in 2019. We also see that more women (along with men) have shifted from the Congress to the BJP than vice-versa between 2014 and 2019. A considerable rise in the Prime Minister's popularity among women voters since the 2014 election could have affected this shift.

## Benefiting from schemes

Another reason could be a result of the various schemes launched by the Modi government. When voters were asked to name one policy or programme of the Modi government that they liked the most, the Ujjwala Yojana, which is directed at women, was most popular. This was followed by Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Jan Dhan Yojna, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao. An equal proportion of men and women (34%) in our study reported to have benefited from the Ujjwala Yojana. Among women beneficiaries of this scheme, more women voted for the BJP compared to those who did not benefit from it (41% and 33% respectively). Among women beneficiaries of the Jan Dhan Yojana, 42% of women beneficiaries opted for the BJP compared to 34% of non-beneficiaries.

There is thus some strength to the argument that despite its overall gender disadvantage, the BJP was able to attract more women voters to it this time as a result of a rise in Mr. Modi's popularity and the impact of his government's schemes.

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