



**THE ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS PARTY IN 1998 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION: A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of the present study was analyzing the electoral performance of the Indian National Congress for India as a whole in the parliamentary election held in 1998. The analysis was carried out at the level of parliamentary constituency for all the 543 constituencies. The Congress was founded by an Englishman, A.O. Hume, on 27th December, 1885. It is the mother institution of almost all the other national parties in the country. It spearheaded the freedom struggle for full 62 years by virtue of which the country had attained independence in 1947. Secondly, the party from its very beginning has adopted the centrist path, which helped the party in drawing vote across the different socio-economic cleavages. These factors explain its dominance over the other political parties till now. The electoral performance of the Congress in terms of seats contested, percent vote polled and seats won in the above-mentioned election.*

**INTRODUCTION**

In 1998, Lok Sabha election was held on 543 seats and the Congress had fielded its candidates on 477 parliamentary seats. The party had won 141 seats. The party had polled 26.18 percent votes. The patterns of seats contested by the Congress in this parliamentary election reveals that the party had contested all the seats in the states and union territories of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Delhi, Lakshadweep and Pondicherry. Barring this, the party had contested 1.3 seats (out of 14) in Assam, 25 seats (out of 26) in Gujarat, 17 seats (out of 20) in Kerala, 41 seats (out of 48) in Maharashtra, 35 seats (out of 39) in Tamil Nadu and 8 seats (out of 13) in Punjab. The party had contested less number of seats in Bihar, where the party fielded its candidates on 21 seats (out of 54). The region-wise analysis of the pattern of seats contested indicates that the party had contested 85.64 percent of total seats in the North Indian states, 81.33 percent in the Hindi-Speaking states and 94.70 percent in the South Indian states.

**STUDY AREA**



In the present study, the electoral analysis has been carried out for India as a whole. The parliamentary constituency has been selected as unit of analysis and the analysis was carried out for all the 543 parliamentary constituencies. The electoral performance of the Indian National Congress has also been carried out at the regional level. For the purpose, India has been divided into Hindi Speaking states (Bihar, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chandigarh and Delhi), North Indian states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Punjab, Sikkim, Tripura, West Bengal, Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and the above mentioned Hindi-Speaking states) and South Indian states (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andaman and Nicobar Island, Lakshadweep and Pondicherry).

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study has been undertaken to find out: (1) what are the main areas of support of the Indian National Congress at all Indian level and regional level, (2) Is the support of the, Indian National Congress is concentrated in specific areas or evenly distributed.

### **DATA BASE**

Electoral data of parliamentary election of 1998 is used in this study. Data of parliamentary election were taken from the various Election Commission reports.

### **METHODS**

Various statistical methods have been used to answer various questions about the voting patterns of the Indian National Congress raised above. In statistical methods, we have used mean, for the calculation of average vote. The techniques of standard deviation, co-efficient of variation are used for measuring the level of heterogeneity in the party vote.

### **SPATIAL PATTERN OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS VOTE**

There were 17 states and 5 union territories in this election where the party had polled above the national average percent vote figure of 29.84. These states and union territories were Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Chandigarh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat, Maharashtra, Goa, Orissa, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Pondicherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep. In the states and union-territories of Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and Tamil Nadu, the party had polled less than the national average. Out of the total 477 seats that the party had contested in this election, the party had polled above 50 percent vote in 57 constituencies (50



in North-Indian states, including 13 in Hindi-Speaking states and 7 in South-Indian states); 40 to 50 percent in 123 constituencies (82 in North-Indian states, including 58 in Hindi Speaking states and 41 in South-Indian states); 30 to 40 percent in 99 constituencies (69 in North-Indian states, including 36 in Hindi-Speaking states and 30 in South-Indian states); 20 to 30 percent in 37 constituencies (28 in North-Indian states, including 10 in Hindi-Speaking states and 9 in South-Indian states); 10 to 20 percent in 44 constituencies (39 in North-Indian states, including 16 in Hindi-Speaking states and 5 in South-Indian states) and below 10 percent in 117 constituencies (84 in North-Indian, including 70 in Hindi-Speaking states and only 33 in South-Indian states) (Table 1).

**Table 1: State-Wise Average Percent of Votes Polled in Seats contested by the Indian National Congress in Parliamentary Election- 1998**

States/Union Territories	Average Vote (%)
Andhra Pradesh	39.01
Arunachal Pradesh	28.73
Assam	43.37
Bihar	20.67
Goa	31.30
Gujarat	38.34
Haryana	25.71
Himachal Pradesh	41.54
Jammu & Kashmir	24.34
Karnataka	36.12
Kerala	42.26
Madhya Pradesh	39.46
Maharashtra	51.23
Manipur	17.42
Meghalaya	51.18
Mizoram	34.86
Nagaland	26.70
Orissa	41.17
Punjab	40.71
Rajasthan	44.33
Sikkim	33.11
Tamil Nadu	5.33
Tripura	41.90
Uttar Pradesh	6.90
West Bengal	16.68
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	35.91
Chandigarh	38.70
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	4.13
Daman & Diu	1.98
Delhi	41.54
Lakshadweep	51.55
Pondicherry	32.12



India	29.84
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The pattern of the Congress vote percentage shows high support base for the party in the states of Rajasthan and Maharashtra. It also shows that the party had polled less number of vote in the whole region of Ganga-Yamuna plain in general and in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in particular. The South-Indian states of Tamil Nadu and the union territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu had also polled less number of vote in favour of the party.

The average vote share of the Congress in this parliamentary election was 29.84 percent. The standard deviation and co-efficient of variation were 18.43 and 61.76 percent respectively. The region-wise analysis indicates a very high degree of heterogeneity in the party voting (Table 2).

**Table 2: Region-Wise Spatial Variation in the Indian National Congress Vote in Parliamentary Election- 1998**

Region	Average Vote (%)	Standard Deviation (%)	Co-efficient of Variation (%)
North Indian States	29.90	18.99	63.51
Hindi – Speaking States	23.83	18.89	79.27
South Indian States	29.80	16.89	56.88
India	29.84	18.43	61.76

The party's vote share indicates that the average vote share in the case of South Indian states was 29.80 percent. The standard deviation and co-efficient of variation were 16.89 and 56.68 percent respectively. In case of North-Indian and Hindi Speaking states the average percent vote figures were 29.90 and 23.83 percent and the standard deviation were 18.99 and 18.89 percent and co-efficient of variation were 63.51 and 79.27 percent respectively. It clearly indicates that the party had a heterogeneous vote pattern in all the three regions in general and in the Hindi-Speaking states in particular. It is interesting to note that the South-Indian states, which acted as pro-Congress region in the past, have also shown heterogeneous vote pattern for the party. The co-efficient of variation of the party vote which were 20.83 and 29.65 percent in 1991 and 1996 parliamentary elections respectively, has increased to as high as 56.68 percent in this election.

### **SPATIAL PATTERNS OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS VICTORIES**

The Congress in this parliamentary election had contested election on 477 seats (out of the total 543 seats) and won 141 seats (one seat more than the previous election of 1996). The Congress party which was primarily responsible for this mid-term poll had very little to show by way of



electoral gains. The Congress victories clearly indicates the un-even distribution of seats won by the party except some concentration of seats won in the states of Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Assam and Andhra Pradesh. The states and union territories wherein the party had showed good electoral performance were Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep. In these states and union territories, the party had won more than 50 percent of the seats it had contested. There were 8 states (Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab) and 4 union territories (Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and Pondicherry) wherein the party had not won even a single seat (Table 3).

**Table 3: State-Wise Indian National Congress Victories in Parliamentary Election – 1998**

States/Union Territories	Total Seats	Seats Contested	Seats Won
Andhra Pradesh	42	42	22
Arunachal Pradesh	02	02	0
Assam	14	14	10
Bihar	54	21	05
Goa	02	02	02
Gujarat	26	25	07
Haryana	10	10	03
Himachal Pradesh	04	04	01
Jammu & Kashmir	06	06	01
Karnataka	28	28	09
Kerala	20	17	08
Madhya Pradesh	40	40	10
Maharashtra	48	41	33
Manipur	02	02	0
Meghalaya	02	02	02
Mizoram	01	01	0
Nagaland	01	01	01
Orissa	21	21	05
Punjab	13	08	0
Rajasthan	25	25	18
Sikkim	01	01	0
Tamil Nadu	39	35	0
Tripura	02	02	0
Uttar Pradesh	85	76	0
West Bengal	42	39	01
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	01	01	01
Chandigarh	01	01	0
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	01	01	0
Daman & Diu	01	01	0
Delhi	07	07	01
Lakshadweep	01	01	01
Pondicherry	01	01	0
India	543	477	141



The regional analysis of the seats won by the Congress indicates that of the total 141 seats won by the party, 100 were from the North Indian states (including 38 from the Hindi-Speaking states) and 41 from the South Indian States. The party in total had won 29.56 percent of seats it had contested. The region – wise picture of the seats won indicates that the party had won 32.81 percent of seats it had contested in the South Indian states, whereas, the percentage victories in the North-Indian states and Hindi-Speaking states were 28.41 and 20.76 percent respectively (Table 4).

**Table 4: Region-Wise Indian National Congress Victories in Parliamentary Election- 1998**

Region	Total	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Victories as percentage to the seats contested
North Indian States	411	353	100	28.41
Hindi – Speaking States	225	183	38	20.76
South Indian States	132	124	41	32.81
India	543	477	141	29.56

The regional analysis reveals that the Congress electoral victories were more in the South Indian states than the North-Indian states and the Hindi-Speaking states.

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