

Party Politics and Political Culture in Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract - This research paper explores the political culture of Madhya Pradesh and examines the role of political parties in shaping it. The study highlights the contributions of both major national parties and regional parties in influencing political practices within the state. Special attention is given to the dominance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over the past two decades and politics and leadership strategies of Indian National Congress prior to 2000, which illustrate how political parties effectively manage elections. Additionally, the paper analyzes voter behavior and its impact on the state's political culture. The study also positions Madhya Pradesh as a central point for Indian political culture due to its cultural, geographical, and political significance, which directly influences broader Indian cultural and political dynamics. By focusing on the interplay between political parties and voter behavior, this paper provides a comprehensive understanding of the political landscape in Madhya Pradesh and its implications for Indian politics.

Keywords- Voter behavior, Bharatiya Janata Party, Regional politics, Indian political culture.

Introduction - Political culture reflects how individuals perceive politics, express their beliefs, interests, and values, and engage with the political system. Aristotle famously stated that humans are social beings who thrive in society; anyone who does not belong to society is either a beast or a deity. Living within a society naturally involves political participation, and through the process of political socialization, a distinct political culture emerges. Sidney Verba identified three types of political cultures: parochial, subject, and participant, which collectively influence societal attitudes and shape our approach to politics. The way people behave toward politics is an essential component of political culture.

The functioning of political systems varies globally, primarily due to the role of political parties. In every country, members of political parties are elected through different mechanisms, reflecting the diversity in political systems. In democratic nations, this variety leads to distinct political practices. In recent decades, there has been a notable rise in the influence of right-wing ideologies, although such trends tend to shift over time.

Madhya Pradesh has played a significant political role in India since ancient times. The modern political geography of the state took shape following the recommendations of the State Reorganization Commission in 1956. Madhya Pradesh was officially formed on November 1, 1956, marking the beginning of its current political landscape. In 2000, the state underwent a major transformation when it was bifurcated to create the new state of Chhattisgarh. From 1956 to 2000 and beyond, Madhya Pradesh has witnessed

continuous political activity and evolving political scenarios, profoundly influencing its political culture.

Methodology: This research paper primarily utilizes secondary data because of its comparative nature, as it is a part of comparative politics. The present political environment of Madhya Pradesh, ancient political scenarios, the behavior of political parties, and voter behavior have been studied. The study also includes an examination of political party manifestos within the context of comparative politics and several research papers and PhD theses have been included as well.

Pre-Independence Period: Before independence, India lacked democratic development due to the absence of organized political parties and the non-existence of Madhya Pradesh as a distinct political entity. The political culture during this period was primarily characterized by feudal governance under the rule of kings and autocrats. Political authority was centralized, with rulers exercising absolute power, and public participation in governance was negligible. Education and decision-making were controlled by the rulers, whose actions were guided by moral and traditional values rather than constitutional principles. The political system was thus autocratic, with minimal regard for public opinion in administrative or legislative matters.

Development After Independence: India gained independence in 1947 and adopted a democratic system of governance. Madhya Pradesh was established as a separate state in 1956 following the recommendations of the State Reorganization Commission. In the initial decades, the political landscape of Madhya Pradesh was dominated

by the Indian National Congress, owing to its pivotal role in the freedom struggle. The Congress Party consistently secured significant victories in both Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections during this period.

However, the political scenario began to shift in the 1990s with the emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP's entry marked the beginning of a competitive political environment in Madhya Pradesh, challenging the Congress's long-standing dominance and reshaping the state's political culture.

Current Political Scenario: The political culture of Madhya Pradesh has undergone significant transformations over the years. Until the 1990s, the Congress Party maintained its dominance. However, after the bifurcation of Madhya Pradesh and the formation of Chhattisgarh in 2000, the BJP emerged as the leading political force. From 2000 to 2018, under the leadership of Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the BJP established a stronghold in the state.

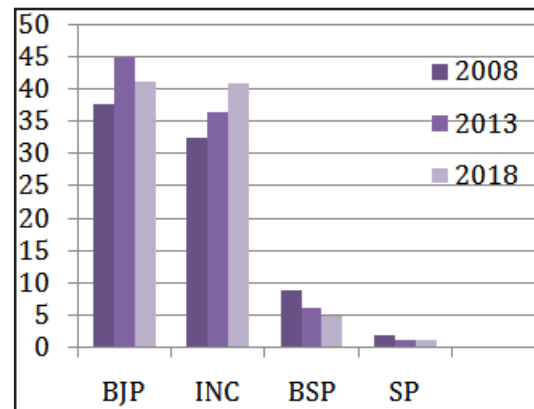
Initially, Uma Bharti served as Chief Minister before Shivraj Singh Chouhan assumed leadership, solidifying the BJP's position in Madhya Pradesh. In the 2018 Assembly elections, the Congress Party became the largest party and briefly formed the government. However, in 2020, following defections by some Congress legislators, the BJP regained power and re-established its government. This ongoing political evolution highlights the dynamic and competitive nature of Madhya Pradesh's political landscape.

Political Culture in Madhya Pradesh

Role of Leadership: Leadership plays an important role in defining the political culture. In Madhya Pradesh, several prominent leaders have significantly influenced the state's political culture and party politics. Prior to 2000, leaders like Shri Laxman Singh and Shri Digvijay Singh from the Congress had a dominant presence. After the formation of Chhattisgarh, Chief Minister Uma Bharti initially contributed to the new Madhya Pradesh's political landscape. Subsequently, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan of the Bharatiya Janata Party established dominance at a higher level in Madhya Pradesh. His image resonated with the common people, and his policies in agriculture and development have had an impact on the state's politics. Mr. Kamal Nath, among the prominent leaders of the opposition, led the Congress party and formed the government as the largest party in 2018. However, this government was formed in alliance with other parties. In 2020, several legislators, including Jyotiraditya Scindia, defected to the BJP, leading to the downfall of the government. Nevertheless, his leadership has significantly influenced the political culture of Madhya Pradesh.

Voter Participation: The activities carried out by political parties and continuous changes in public opinion due to knowledge and social transformation affect voting. Along with understanding and changes in leadership capability, the percentage of votes for political parties fluctuates. In 2008, the BJP received 37.64% of the vote, while the

Congress received 32.39%, the BahujanSamajwadi Party received 8.97%, and the Samajwadi Party received 1.90% of the vote.



Voting Percentage Party Wise: In 2013, the Bharatiya Janata Party received 44.88% of the vote, the Indian National Congress received 36.38%, the BahujanSamajwadi Party received 6.29%, and the Samajwadi Party received 1.20%. And in 2018, the BJP received 41.02%, the Indian National Congress received approximately 40%, the BahujanSamajwadi Party received approximately 5%, and the Samajwadi Party received 1.30% of the vote.

These figures clearly indicate that the BJP's percentage increased in 2013 compared to 2008, but decreased significantly in 2018. In contrast, the Indian National Congress' vote share was 32.39% in 2008, which remained at 26.38% in 2013, but rose to 40.89% in 2018. This means that the Congress' vote share significantly increased from 2008 to 2018, bringing it close to the BJP's vote share of 41.02% in 2018, while the Congress' vote share was 40.89%. It is noteworthy that despite this, the Indian National Congress had a vote percentage of 40.89% and the Bharatiya Janata Party had a vote percentage of 41.02%, meaning there was a difference of approximately a few percentage points. Even after this, the Indian National Congress candidates emerged victorious, and the Indian National Congress continued to rise as the largest party in 2018.

Key Political Trends

Shift in Power: In Madhya Pradesh's politics, there is competition between the Congress and the BJP. The influence of smaller parties is limited, although in 2018, the Congress party formed a coalition government in power. However, even then, the main parties present in Madhya Pradesh are primarily the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Indian National Congress. The Bharatiya Janata Party claims to be primarily a Hindu nationalist party and incorporates right-wing political ideology, whereas the Indian National Congress has been active since the time of India's independence and continues to promote agendas such as development. However, due to the presence of both parties

in Madhya Pradesh, regional parties do not have a significant existence or are very weak. This is because during the tenure of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Indian National Congress, both parties have worked extensively at the developmental level in Madhya Pradesh, and as a result, their political influence is strong in the state. Despite the dominance of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Madhya Pradesh for nearly two decades, the Indian National Congress still exists as the largest opposition party.

Conclusion: The research highlights that the political culture of Madhya Pradesh has been significantly shaped by the contributions of two major national parties: the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress. While regional and smaller parties, such as the Samajwadi Party and BahujanSamaj Party, play a role, their influence on the state's political culture remains relatively limited in comparison.

Election analyses from 2008, 2013, and 2018 reaffirm that Madhya Pradesh's political landscape is predominantly a two-party competition. Leadership capability has emerged as a critical factor in the state's political stability. Over the past two decades, the BJP has established dominance under the strong leadership of Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, while the Congress held a similar influential position before 2000, driven by its own prominent leaders.

In a democratic system, the dynamic interplay between the public and political parties is central to shaping political

culture. People's thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes towards politics are deeply intertwined with the policies, ideologies, and leadership styles of the political parties. This interconnectedness underscores the evolving nature of Madhya Pradesh's political culture, reflecting both continuity and change in response to shifting political scenarios and leadership paradigms.

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