

Regional Seminar

on

Analysing the Mandate of Assembly Elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram, 2023

March 26, 2024

VENUE

Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur



**Institute of Development Studies
Jaipur**

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**Indian Council of Social Science Research
New Delhi**

About the Seminar

State Assembly elections in five states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and the north-eastern state of Mizoram were held during the month of November 2023 and the results were declared on December 3, 2023. To many commentators, these elections were a semi-final to the Lok Sabha elections to be held during the summer of 2024. The outcome of the elections came as a surprise as the BJP not only retained power in Madhya Pradesh but wrested it from the Congress in the states of Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. The Congress gained some solace from its victory in the southern state of Telangana defeating the Bharat Rashtra Samiti. In Mizoram, the Zoram People's Movement snatched power from the Mizo National Front in a multi-cornered contest.

People's mandate in these five states has raised a number of issues which need to be discussed and analysed. The nature of party contestation has been an issue of critical significance. Each of these five states has their own stories to tell.

- In Rajasthan, although the contest was primarily bipolar between the BJP and the Congress, smaller regional political parties and independent candidates managed to corner a sizable support in one-fourth of the constituencies. Regular oscillation of power between these two national parties has continued to be a feature of electoral competition in Rajasthan.
- Madhya Pradesh, on the other hand, emerged as a strict two-party state with the Congress and the BJP capturing all but one seat between them. The BJP emerged triumphant for the fifth consecutive time much against most survey predictions.
- Like Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh also remained a two-party state with the BJP and the Congress sharing 89 of the 90 seats with only one seat going to the regional Gondvana Gantantra Party. But unlike its neighboring state, Chhattisgarh has been having a regular oscillation of power more like Rajasthan.
- Southern state of Telangana witnessed a multi-party contestation with the Congress, BRS, BJP and the AIMIM emerging as the main contestants. In this multi-cornered contest, the Congress emerged victorious snatching power from the regional political party, the BRS.
- Far away in the north eastern state of Mizoram, a regional political party, the Zoram People's Movement, emerged triumphant getting the better of the MNF, INC and the BJP.

Thus the political trajectories in each of these five states need careful analysis.

The mandate has also raised pertinent questions concerning the shifting social bases of the regional and national political parties. Variables like caste, class, religion, region, gender, age, education levels, occupation and locality have always been of significant analytical value in elections in India. 'Social engineering' is a term which has captured the attention of the academia in recent times. Caste census has turned out to be an issue of contention with its votaries and opponents. Central to this is the overarching debate of a homogeneous Hindu society against the agenda of social justice, majoritarianism versus multiculturalism and the artificial binary of nationalism and democracy. How far the election campaign and the actual outcome reflect these social variables and conceptual debates also seek the attention of the scholarly community?

An issue which held the attention of media as well as scholars during these elections was that of projection of a chief ministerial candidate by the political parties. While the national political parties desisted from declaring anyone as its leader, the regional players thought otherwise. After the declaration of the results, the manner, in which the whole process took place and the outcome also has become an issue of debate about the domination which the 'party high command' exercises in determining the chief minister. Closely related is the issue of the 'double engine sarkar' projected by the BJP during its campaign and the projection of the Prime Minister as the principal vote catcher for the party belittling the importance of the state-based political leaders. Thus, the issues of leadership and governance carry a lot of salience in any serious discussion. Incumbency and anti-incumbency factors too need to be pondered upon.

No election analysis can be complete without having a proper scrutiny of the issues of political economy. Promises and implementation of welfare schemes, 'freebies' and actual economic condition of state economy were central to election campaign in these state assembly elections. Issues of corruption and farmers wellbeing also occupied centre stage during the elections. How far these factors were instrumental in determining the political choices of the electorate is an important issue of investigation which this seminar seeks to focus upon. The key role of media, especially social media, is another area which has exercised the minds of researchers and needs serious enquiry.

The role of party organization, nature of campaign and campaign strategies, candidate selection, significance of survey predictions, turn-out and hiring of professional

agencies by political parties are issues, as 'micro-management' catches the fancy of party strategists. The seminar expects to throw light on these ancillary issues as well.

This one-day regional seminar, sponsored by the ICSSR, seeks to dwell upon the issues identified above which can be summarized as follows:

- Nature of party competitions
- Issues of leadership and governance
- Socio-economic bases of voting behavior
- Conceptual binaries of majoritarianism and multiculturalism, homogeneity and social justice, nationalism and democracy
- Issues of political economy
- Role of social media in particular and media in general
- Party organization, campaign strategies and micro-management
- Changing nature of turn-out and the role of the Election Commission

The above themes of the seminar are only suggestive. The scholarly community may go beyond these and reflect upon other relevant issues as well. Since the presentations in the seminar are going to be published, the participants are expected to submit a full-length paper of about 5000 words.

Important Deadlines

Submission of abstract (500 words): **March 8, 2024**

Paper Acceptance Confirmation: **March 11, 2024**

Full Paper submission: **March 21, 2024**

Scholars and researchers interested in participating in the Seminar may submit their abstract and full papers as per the above time schedule to

rseminar2024idsj@gmail.com

Note: There is no registration fee to present a paper or to participate in the seminar. To out-station paper presenters, the IDS, Jaipur will provide local hospitality and will also take care of their to and fro economy class air travel/II class train/ taxi fare as per IDS rules.

You may address your communication to:

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