



Regional Political Parties in Haryana: An Analysis

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Abstract

Understanding the nature of Haryana's regional political parties is the aim of this study. Regional Political parties play a remarkable role in working all types of government. This paper explains electoral performance and support base of regional political parties in Haryana. The role of regional political parties has been significant in Haryana politics. Regional parties emerged namely Haryana Vikas Party (HVP) and Haryana Janhit Congress (HJC). Both HVP and HJC merged with Congress in 2005 and 2016 respectively. INLD has been the single regional party with a strong position in the state. But in 2019, INLD split into another faction named Jannayak Janta Party (JJP).

Keywords: State, Caste, Government, Political Parties, Assembly, Region

Introduction

Regional parties are those parties which do not operate in many states but whose activities are mainly confined to only a single or a handful of states. They are by-products of religious, linguistic, economic and ethnic factors. Another important factor that played a role in the rise of regional political parties is the caste system that was and is an important part of the Indian political system. Generally, in the case of different regions, interests depend upon minorities and majorities. When one caste is dominant over the other, it results in caste prejudices and serves as an important factor of regionalism. People of dominant castes, who are in majority, become the vote bank and they become desirous of controlling the government. Caste interest gives people an opportunity to come together on a common platform. After some time, this common platform gives way to a new political party, e.g., INLD in Haryana.¹ The logic of electoral democracy has taken its natural course in Haryana, where the numerically preponderant intermediate peasant castes like the Jats (25-30 % of the population) and Ahirs have been coterminous with the establishment of the state itself. As a result, the state saw the early emergence of regional parties like INLD.

¹ Teginder, *Regional Parties in National Politics*, K. K. Publications, New Delhi, 2008, p.250.

Regional political parties were also formed before the creation of Haryana state. For example, the Unionist Party was founded by Sir Chhotu Ram, Haryana Lok Samiti by Sher Singh and the Gandhi Janata party by Pt. Sri Ram Sharma. These parties were merged in Congress party from time to time. After the formation of the Haryana state the regional parties again emerged in the state. With the formation of the state, factionalist trends began in different political parties. The factionalism in the Congress party resulted in the further formation of the regional parties.² The first splinter group to step out of the Congress (I) and form a separate regional party was the Vishal Haryana Party (VHP) in 1967. The party was primarily a personal triumph of its leader Rao Birender Singh, who had a big following among the Ahir peasantry. He tried to protect the peasant interests but soon, the party clout came to be limited only to the Ahir belt.

VHP remained the ruling party for a short time when Rao Birender Singh headed the United Front government after the fall of the Congress (I) government headed by B.D. Sharma. The party lost power after the government's dismissal in November 1967, but it succeeded in emerging as the main opposition party in 1968 elections, because of the enbloc support of Ahirs, who regarded Rao Birender Singh as their undisputed leader. The party's support base declined in the Assembly elections of 1972, but the party improved its position in the Assembly elections of 1977 by winning five seats.³ But Rao Birender Singh realised that the party had no future in the state because the regional identity was weak in Haryana, so the party merged in Congress (I) in 1978.

The Bhartiya Kranti Dal (BKD) another regional party was started by Ch. Charan Singh after the Assembly elections of 1967. Similarly Arya Sabha was organised by Swami Agnivesh in 1970 which was based on the ideology of Vedic socialism. Both failed to strike roots in Haryana. Some other regional parties emerged namely Haryana Vikas Party (HVP) and Haryana Janhit Congress (HJC). Both HVP and HJC merged with Congress in 2005 and 2016 respectively. The only regional party with significant influence in the state has been INLD. However, the INLD divided into the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) in 2019.

Indian National Lok Dal

The INLD was the brainchild of Ch. Devi Lal, a known stalwart of Indian politics and known as 'Tau of Haryana'. Ch. Devi Lal rose as a farmer leader during the peasant movement in the 1950s in Punjab. He went on to become the President of the Punjab Congress in 1956. After the reorganization of Punjab in 1966 on a linguistic basis, Devi Lal became a popular name in the political spheres of Haryana. In 1971 he left the Congress party and created a new political party Bhartiya Lok Dal along with Charan Singh. The Bhartiya Lok Dal gained victory on the Rori constituency in the end of 1974. The political scenario of the whole country changed dramatically when Indira Gandhi- the incumbent Prime Minister declared an emergency through the President of India in June 1975. This moment was a watershed in the history of India and became the catalyst

² R.K. Sharma, "Voting Pattern in the Fourth General Election—III: Congress Gains from a Divided Opposition in Haryana", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 2, No. 26, July 1, 1967, p. 1183.

³ Ranbir Singh, "Political Development in Haryana: A study of Interaction between Society and Politics" *Journal of Haryana Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1-2, 1977, p. 68.

for further political trends in Indian polity. Devi Lal and his party opposed the emergency and he was imprisoned along with other opposition leaders for 19 months.

During the days of the emergency, political movements, to end the political monopoly of Congress over India, swept the whole country. Regional activities became denser and created a united front on the national stage. Devi Lal and his party vehemently opposed the Indira regime and its unlawful emergency. The emergency concluded into general elections in 1977, in which Devi Lal and his Bhartiya Lok dal merged into the Janata Party which emerged as the victors against Congress (I).⁴ Devi Lal went on to become the Chief Minister of Haryana in 1977. He remained a Member of Parliament from 1980 to 1982. During this time, the anti-Punjab sentiment in the politics of Haryana began to determine the political processes in the state. Due to the issue of Chandigarh and SYL with the ensuing political storm in Punjab, all political parties in Haryana were overly zealous in opposing the demands of Punjab as the interests of Punjab and Haryana converged. The situation soon turned communal into a Hindu-Sikh divide. Devi Lal kept his distance from communal smearings but stood firmly for Haryana's interests against Punjab.

This was the time when the neighbouring state of Punjab was to become the battleground of the hardest fought militant struggles in India. One of its catalysts was the issue of SYL. Devi Lal had created the Lok Dal in 1980 by this time. The political parties of Haryana opposed each other on various political issues but were virtually united against the demands put by Akalis' in Punjab. They did not want any concessions by the Centre to Punjab, which they believed had repercussions for Haryana, especially on the issue of SYL and Chandigarh. This political scenario in Haryana further fueled conflict in Punjab. Lok Dal also stood for the construction of SYL and had started the process under its government in Haryana by 1980.

In 1982, Lok Dal contested the Legislative Assembly elections in alliance with the BJP. These parties made an alliance for the first time in that year. The performance of Lok Dal was good in rural areas, whereas its ally performed well in urban areas. INLD-BJP both won the majority of seats only in the 'Jat-belt'. Its leader Devi Lal put forward his claim for the formation of the government. But in the beginning, the Governor asked him to prove his majority. Later on, under the pressure of the Centre government invited the Congress leader Bhajan Lal and sworn him as Chief Minister. Before the Assembly elections of 1987, Devi Lal launched Nyayayudh (battle of justice) under the banner of Haryana Sangharsh Samiti. Lok Dal with its prior alliance partner BJP performed truly well in 1987 and managed to form government in Haryana.⁵ In 1987 Lok Dal not only secured electoral victories in new areas but was also able to capture vote share in the Rural-South region. These regions were traditionally weak for Lok Dal. After this, Devi Lal decided to join the Janata Dal government in 1989 and got the chair of the Deputy Prime Minister in the government of V.P. Singh and Chandrasekhar Rao. This was the time when Devi Lal's identity emerged as a major national leader.⁶ After becoming Deputy Prime Minister, his son Om Prakash Chautala captured the CM's chair in Haryana.

⁴ Paul R. Brass, *Caste, Faction and Party in Indian Politics*, Chanakya Publication, Delhi, 1985, p. 166.

⁵ S.S. Chahar, *Dynamics of Haryana Politics*, Vol. 1, Sanjay Parkashan, New Delhi, 2004, Vol. I, *op.cit.*, p. 127.

⁶ Chaman Lal Jhamb, *Chief Ministers of Haryana*, Arun Publishing House, Chandigarh, 2004, p.163.

The President's Rule was imposed in the state before the Assembly elections of 1991 because the government lost the majority in the House when the Speaker expelled three government supporters under the anti-defection law. Lok Dal had to pay the price for the poor performance of its government and ultimately lost in the Assembly elections of 1991. The Om Prakash Chautala created Haryana Lok Dal in 1996 and then renamed it to Indian National Lok Dal. INLD improved its position in the state during the Assembly elections of 1998. It contested in alliance with BSP. The unpopular rule of the HVP-BJP combine and the continued downslide of Congress were the reasons for the improved position of INLD. The INLD was a member of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which formed the Union government under the dominant role of the BJP from 1998 to 2004. Further, Assembly elections of 2000 clearly showed that INLD was no longer a party of Jats only, but its roots were extended to other sections of society too. INLD received support both from urban and rural areas but again mainly big support from the rural sector.

The 14th Lok Sabha elections of 2004 were in favour of Congress. There was an Anti-INLD wave that got converted in favour of Congress. People were disappointed with INLD. After that, INLD faced defeat in both the 2005 and 2009 Assembly elections. During these elections, the party in alliance with BJP was trying to give a tough fight to Congress in the state. However, the alliance got rejected by the electorate. From the Lok Sabha elections of 2004 to the Assembly elections of 2009, INLD was nowhere in the electoral scene.

During the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections of 2014 in Haryana, there was conversion to national factors (including Modi factor) than the state-level factors. The state's main opposition party, the INLD, which had remained in power in Haryana from 1999 to 2005, suffered a heavy loss. Its seats had been reduced by more than one third. However, its vote share declined only from 25.79 to 24.1 per cent which was a loss of only 1.69 per cent. Thus, a marginal decline in vote share caused a significant decrease in the number of seats won. This happened mainly because of the logic of the first past the post system and the pattern of division of INLD votes between the BJP and Congress. But the party was able to retain its support base even though its supremo Om Prakash Chautala was in jail due to the JBT teacher recruitment scam. However, the party failed to expand its support on account of sympathy for Chautala as perceived by its supporters.

Further, the party went into a spiral of downfalls as a power struggle emerged in the Chautala family and resulted in a split in the party. A new party named Jannayak Janata Party (JJP) was formed by Dushyant Chautala the grandson of Om Prakash Chautala against Abhay Chautala, the younger son of Om Prakash Chautala. Both claimed to be the true heirs of the political ideology of Ch. Devi Lal.⁷ The newly formed JJP performed better than its counterpart – the INLD in the Assembly elections of 2019 and formed an alliance with BJP which resulted in forming the government with Dushyant Chautala as Deputy Chief Minister. In the Assembly elections of 2019, the INLD forged an alliance with Akali Dal. The Chautala family had maintained close relations with the Badals' of Punjab who have created a monopoly over the Akali Dal in Punjab. However, the issue of SYL often becomes the deal-breaker in the Akali-INLD alliance. In the Assembly

⁷ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/jannayak-janata-party-ajay-chautala-faction-unveils-new-party-5485783/> *The Indian Express*. 10 December 2018. Retrieved 11 December 2018.

elections of 2019 it was one of the poorest performances of INLD with winning only 1 seat out of 90. This was the most embarrassing performance for INLD in its whole history.

Support Base of INLD

INLD is one of the principal political parties in Haryana. It is always supposed to stand in the interest of the farming community and rural people. The ideology of the party and its programme is to guard the interests of the peasantry. The party started to safeguard the interest of the peasantry against the urban rich and the capitalist class. The party colour of INLD has been green, representing agriculture. It could be stated that INLD was same to the peasantry of Haryana was what the Akali Dal was to farmers in Punjab in the good old days. The party has a strong support base of the majority population (peasantry). Party has been concentrating upon the issues related to the welfare of the peasantry even during the mass movements against the Punjab Accord. The party has fits significantly in the socio-economic and political background of the state. Haryana is primarily a rural state with a majority population dependent on agriculture. In rural Haryana, peasantry dominates due to its numerical and economic strength.

INLD ideology is stated to be dedicated to the all-around upliftment of farmers, labourers, the downtrodden and the exploited. It draws inspiration from Jan Nayak Ch. Devi Lal's principles. The party considers the right of peaceful and democratic dissent, including Satyagrah or Non-violent resistance as a fundamental right of the people.⁸ The politics in the state of Haryana is primarily affected by caste dynamics. The INLD has enjoyed widespread support from the Jat community as INLD emerged as a farmers' party wherein Jats are closely associated with agriculture. Ch. Devi Lal maintained a personality of a simple Jat which intrigued the Jat peasantry of Haryana.⁹ He was often seen playing cards in his village like a simple Jat, thus also called 'Tau' (Uncle). O.P. Chautala has also tried to maintain that Jat imagery. Furthermore, INLD has maintained a centrist stance with no definite tilt towards political left or right. The policies put forward by INLD come under the social liberal structure. As a regional party, INLD has maintained that the fulfillment of the interests of the people of Haryana is its primary motive. While representing Haryana, the INLD as a regional party, has supported SYL even when they had close political relations with Akali Dal in Punjab As a regional party, it also supports the distribution of powers to states and the decentralization of powers in India.

The INLD's top leadership equation has always stood in favour of the Jat peasantry. So, the most committed supporters of the party come from the so-called Jat-belt. Although the party has always done much better in Assembly elections than Lok Sabha elections, the phenomenon exhibits that there is a section of voters who preferred to vote for the party only in Assembly elections and not in Lok Sabha elections. The INLD claimed the Jat interest in the state and but now it has got split into two parties. After the split, supporters of the INLD admitted that a majority of the party's support base has shifting to JJP. Even many other claimants have emerged in different parties in the state on behalf of the Jat vote.

⁸ <http://inld.co.in>

⁹ Charan Singh, *Economic Nightmare of India*, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991, p.193.

Haryana Vikas Party

The year 1990 was an eventful year of political upheaval in Haryana. President rule was imposed in April 1991 and elections were held in June. Bansi Lal entered the fray under the banner of his own party-Haryana Vikas Party. Bansi Lal floated this party after he left Congress in 1990. He was in opposition to the leadership of Bhajan Lal who enjoyed the support of the Congress's high command. The party contested Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in 1991 and could win 1 out of 10 Lok Sabha seats and 12 out of 90 Assembly seats. Although, it attained limited success during the 1991 elections, but the Assembly elections of 1996 clearly belonged to Haryana Vikas Party and its alliance partner BJP.¹⁰ In this election, the alliance secured 44 seats nearly the half-mark in 90 members of the Haryana Assembly. The mandate was in Bansi Lal's favour and the electorate voted for the HVP-BJP alliance. In 1996, it had become clear that Bansi Lal would return to power.¹¹ More important to his electoral triumph in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections were the public's negative reaction to the previous Bhajan Lal regimes. Consequently, the HVP, went from third to the first position. But the government headed by HVP lost its popularity by the time of the 1998 Lok Sabha elections. The government also lost the peasantry's support during elections and the HVP-BJP alliance could win only 2 seats out of 10. In 1999 'Aya Ram Gaya Ram' political culture again repeated itself.¹² This time the national party, BJP withdrew its support to Bansi Lal and switched its loyalty to INLD. It proved beneficial to BJP during the next Lok Sabha elections. Congress came to its rescue and assured support to the beleaguered HVP supremeo but it also changed its stance within 19 days. The disgruntled elements of HVP with 17 members also deserted Bansi Lal and finally merged into INLD. As a result, the HVP government fell and Bansi Lal resigned from the Chief Minister's post.

The HVP was completely routed in Assembly elections of 2000. It could win only 2 out of the total 82 seats that it contested and secured just 5.7 per cent vote share. HVP was the biggest loser and saw the continuous loss of its support base in the Lok Sabha elections of 2004. Consequently, it led to its merger in its parental party Congress before the Assembly elections of 2005. In 2005, Bansi Lal decided not to contest elections from Congress. In 2005, Surendra Singh and Ranbir Singh, both sons of Bansi Lal managed to win the election. In the government of Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Surendra Singh was made a Cabinet Minister. Shortly after becoming the minister, Bansi Lal's son Surendra Singh died in an air crash. After Surendra Singh's death, his wife Kiran Chaudhary stepped into politics and managed to become an MLA from Tosham. Bansi Lal too died in 2006.¹³ Kiran Chaudhary's daughter Shruti Choudhary got a Congress ticket from the Bhiwani-Mahendergarh in the 2009 Lok Sabha seat and she managed to win the election.¹⁴ Shruti Chaudhary had to face defeat in 2014. Despite the defeat, the rule of the Bansi Lal family in the Bhiwani area still persists. Kiran Chaudhary became MLA from the Tosham seat, in 2014 and she became the Leader of the Congress

¹⁰ Paul Wallace, "General Elections, 1996: Regional Parties Dominant in Punjab and Haryana", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 32, No. 46, November, 15-21, 1997, p. 2967.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² S. S. Chahar, *Dynamics of Haryana Politics*, Vol. II. Sanjay Prakashan, New Delhi, 2004, p. 407.

¹³ <https://frontline.thehindu.com/politics/politics-of-caste/article5914997.ece>

¹⁴ "[Battle lines drawn for multi-cornered contest](#)". *The Tribune*, Retrieved May 4, 2014.

Legislature Party in the Assembly. In the meantime, Bansi Lal's family came face-to-face with the controversy over the property. This also shows the persistence of dynastic politics in Haryana.

In 2019 the credibility of the Bansi Lal family was once again at stake. In the 17th Lok Sabha election of 2019, Congress had shown confidence in Shruti Choudhary from the Bhiwani-Mahendragarh seat but she lost. On the other side, in the Assembly elections of 2019, Kiran Choudhary again won from Tosham Constituency.

Haryana Janhit Congress (Bhajan Lal)

The history of regional parties in the state usually has a short life and sooner or later they get merged into their parent party. The Congress's victory in Haryana in the Assembly election of 2005 caused a major rift in its State unit, as it opted to make Bhupinder Singh Hooda, leader of the Jat caste, the Chief Minister instead of Bhajan Lal. However, the party's decision was not accepted by the Bhajan Lal family. Bhajan Lal's son Kuldeep Bishnoi criticized the central leadership and started showing a rebellion against the Gandhi family. On December 2, 2007, Bhajan Lal and Kuldeep Bishnoi decided to end their journey with the Congress.¹⁵ They laid the foundation of the Haryana Janhit Congress with the rising sun as its symbol, which was subsequently changed to a village woman and then to a tractor. Kuldeep Bishnoi became the chief of the new outfit. He accused Sonia Gandhi for foisting Bhupinder Singh Hooda as Chief Minister of Haryana. Haryana Janhit Congress (BL) opened its electoral account in the by election in 2008. In this by-election, the former Chief Minister Bhajan Lal retained his traditional Adampur seat. The Lok Sabha elections of 2009 were very crucial for Haryana Janhit Congress, which contested its first Lok Sabha elections. The party had at stake not only its political future but also the question of reputation and survival of the legacy of Bhajan Lal in Haryana politics.

In March 2009, the Haryana Janhit Congress suffered a setback when the secretary of its Mahila Wing, Meena Sheokand, joined the Congress. Earlier, another party leader, Ramesh Kumar Solanki, also joined the Congress after meeting the Chief Minister, Bhupinder Singh Hooda. In the Lok Sabha elections of 2009, the party won in Hisar, where Bhajan Lal emerged as the winning candidate, but its candidates lost badly in most constituencies. Interestingly, the Haryana Janhit Congress (BL) performed better than the INLD. In June 2009, the BSP forged an alliance with the Haryana Janhit Congress for the forthcoming Haryana Assembly elections in 2009. Under this agreement, the BSP was to contest 40 and HJC was to nominate candidates on 50 seats in the 90-member Assembly. But the BSP severed its ties with the HJC (BL) ahead of the Assembly election following their differences over seat sharing. The HJC was contested 87 out of the 90 seats. HJC won six Assembly seats, i.e. Adampur, Assandh, Charkhi Dadri, Hansi, Narnaull, Samalkha. But five MLAs joined Indian National Congress and called it a merger, thus leaving only Kuldeep Bishnoi from Adampur as the party's legislator in Haryana Assembly. After that Kuldeep Bishnoi declared his support for the BJP in September 2013. He supported the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi. In 2014, the party

¹⁵ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/bhajan-lal-quits-congress-floats-new-party/articleshow/2589681.cms>.

allianced with the BJP.¹⁶ The HJC won the Hisar by-election, but in the Lok Sabha elections 2014, HJC chief Kuldeep Bishnoi lost to Dushyant Chautala in Hisar. After the Lok Sabha elections, Kuldeep Bishnoi ended the alliance with the BJP and allied with the Vinod Sharma-led Haryana Jan Chetna Party for the Assembly elections of 2014.

In the Assembly elections of 2014, Kuldeep Bishnoi and his wife Renuka Bishnoi won their seats. Like the other regional parties, Vishal Haryana Party and Haryana Vikas Party, Haryana Janhit Congress also merged with the Congress after nine years of separation in April 2016. Congress gave ticket to Bhavya Bishnoi the son of Kuldeep Bishnoi in the Lok Sabha elections of 2019, but he lost. But In Assembly election of 2019 Kuldeep Bishnoi got re-elected from Adampur constituency.

Jannayak Janta Party

JJP is the latest regional political party in Haryana. It emerged as a splinter group. It was founded on December 9, 2018, by Dushyant Chautala with the claimed ideology of Devi Lal, who served as Deputy Prime Minister of India and Chief Minister of Haryana. JJP emerged from a split in the INLD because of the ups and downs in the Chautala family. Dushyant Chautala (son of Ajay Chautala) promised that the new outfit would follow the path shown by Devi Lal.

The formation of the new party was the result of power struggle within the Chautala family. On December 9, 2018 Dushyant Chautala formally launched the 'Jannayak Janata Party'.¹⁷ The new party's name begins with 'Jannayak', attributed to Devi Lal. Various speakers at the rally pledged to walk the path shown by the late leader. The inauguration gathering was of over 6 lakh people in Jind. This was the highest ever gathering Haryana had seen in a political event since 1986 when Devi Lal addressed the public in rally. Ajay Chautala was absent from the Jind rally, being in jail because of his conviction of JBT scam. On January 31, 2019 a little over a month after its formation, the JJP fought a crucial Assembly by-election from Jind in Haryana. They lost the election, but certainly not by a massive margin.

The party contested in the 17th Lok Sabha elections of 2019 in alliance with the AAP in the state. However, it failed to impact that time, and the BJP swept all 10 Lok Sabha seats from Haryana. In the Assembly election of 2019, JJP recorded a vote share of 15.3 per cent. It made an impressive debut by securing 10 seats which led it to make a deal with the BJP to form a coalition government.¹⁸ JJP has emerged as a key regional player in Haryana politics and appears to have swayed the INLD's core vote bank i.e the Jats.

It is pertinent to understand the history of the political reality in the state. The support base and electoral performance of various regional parties in Haryana politics helps in understanding the dynamics of the state politics.

¹⁶ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/elections-2014-bjp-doubles-its-vote-share-in-haryana/articleshow/35219806.cms?from=mdr>

¹⁷ <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/archive/haryana/news-detail-742392>

¹⁸ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/abhay-chautala-rules-out-inlds-merger-with-jjp/article29820948.ece>