

Decline of a Party That Has a Legacy of Colonial Upsurge: Indian National Congress - A Nationwide Decline

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Abstract- *Indian National Congress, which was established in 1885, played a pivotal role in the Independence movement of India. A party that influenced the National and State politics for decades, A party that has given India it's greatest number of Prime Ministers. What happened to its legacy? Why is it not able to build back its threshold as it used to have before 2014? Let's figure it out!*

Indexed Terms- *Indian National Congress, Legacy, Influence.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian National Congress (INC), informally called the Congress or "THE GRAND OLD PARTY OF INDIA" in contemporary media parlance is one of the oldest party of India, is one of the oldest political parties of world. It was formed in 1885 and one of its stated objectives was that it will form a germ of a native and if properly conducted will constitute in few years an unanswerable reply to the assertion that India is wholly unfit for any form of representative institutions. Lord Dufferin who served as the Viceroy during its inception, opined that the group of individuals in the NATIONALISTIC CONGRESS represented only an infinitesimal section of people and was a "microscopic minority" with compatible loyalty to England (Chandra, 1964:199-208). However, the party changed its political gears and soon became the torch bearer of the freedom movement and led India in the front in gaining independence from the British rule in 1947. The Congress ruled for five decades with brief interludes before it lost its historical domination and political supremacy in general elections of 2014 (Rai, 2023).

NAME OF THE CANDIDATE(PM)	DURATION
Jawahar Lal Nehru	15 August 1947 - 27 May 1964
Gulzari Lal Nanda	11 January 1966 - 24 January 1966
Lal Bahadur Shastri	9 June 1964 - 11 January 1966
Gulzari Lal Nanda	11 January 1966 - 24 January 1966
Indira Gandhi	24 January 1966 - 24 March 1977 / 14 January 1980 - 31 October 1984
Rajiv Gandhi	31 October 1984 - 2 December 1989
P. V. Narasimha Rao	21 June 1991 - 16 May 1996
Manmohan Singh	22 May 2004 - 26 May 2014

SOURCE: ONEINDIA.COM

II. THE DEFEAT OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The defeat of ruling party after two terms in office would officially not invite a great attention. But what happened to Congress party in 2014 have all characteristics of an electoral disaster rather than a defeat. Even then, electoral upsets are not entirely unknown in the lives of parties. However, the electoral decimation of the Congress Party would still qualify as a seismic shift. It also means that this is the time Congress can either decline further or begin to redefine itself (Palshika R, 2014).

III. ANATOMY OF THE DEFEAT

In terms of both seats and votes, the parliamentary elections of 2014 witnessed the Congress dip to a new

low of 20% vote share at the national level and only 44 seats and little over 8% seats in the Lok Sabha.

SEATS WON AND VOTES SECURED BY CONGRESS IN DIFFERENT ELECTIONS SINCE 1984

YE R	TOTA L SEAT S	TURN OUT	CONGRE SS WON	VOT E
1984	542	64.07	415	48.01
1989	549	61.95	197	39.53
1991	537	55.88	244	36.64
1996	543	57.94	140	28.80
1998	543	61.97	141	25.82
1999	543	59.99	114	28.30
2004	543	58.07	145	26.53
2009	543	58.20	206	28.55
2014	543	66.44	44	19.31

SOURCE: CSDS DATA UNIT

GENERAL ELECTION OF 2024

The Indian General Elections 2024 were a crucial fixture as the Indian National Congress led by a political formation of left ideology (INDIA) had an excellent opportunity of defeating the BJP led Right wing ideology (NDA). The reason could be there two term incumbencies. It was a referendum on which the propagated the primacy of Hindus and cultural nationalism against INDIA bloc's united campaign for saving the constitution and democracy wherein both the alliances were guaranteeing deeper welfarism and freebies.

2024 GENERAL ELECTION

TOTAL SEATS	BJP	NDA	CONGRESS	INDIA
543	240	293	99	234

SOURCE: THE HINDU

SEAT PERFORMANCE OF CONGRESS IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS

YE R	SEAT S WON	SEATS CHANG E	VOTE SHAR E	VOTE SHAR E
2024	99	+47	21	+2
2019	52	+9	19	0

2014	44	-162	19	-10
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TOTAL NUMBER OF SEATS:543

SOURCE: ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

REASONS FOR DECLINE IN THE EXISTENCE AND FUNCTIONING OF CONGRESS PARTY

- Contradictions and Inherent Instabilities in Party Politics.
- Dynastic Control of Central Leadership (Hold of Gandhi Family).
- Erosion of Congress Support Base.

YEAR: NATIONA L ELECTIO N	TOTAL PARLIAMENTA RY SEATS	SEAT S WON	VOT E %AG E
1984	543	415	48.1
1989	543	197	39.5
1991	543	244	36.4

DYNASTIC PRIME MINISTER: RAJIV GANDHI

SONIA-RAHUL GANDHI (DYNASTIC PARTY PRESIDENTS)

1998	543	141	25.8
1999	543	114	28.3
2004	543	145	26.5
2009	543	206	28.6
2014	543	44	19.5
2019	543	52	19.5

SOURCE: ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

CONCLUSION AND WAY AHEAD FOR POLITICAL REINVENTION

To conclude, the political parties that led independence movement in South Asia, often led by first families, paved the way for populist leaders, confessional politics representing, new constituents and aspirations (Candland,1997).

The primary reason for the decay of Congress is not only personalism and organizational decay but it also includes dynasticism, factionalism and defunct conciliation mechanisms. The party should give primacy to party members based on the merit and social diversity, design a conflict management to consolidate its cadres, and increase the robustness of the party system. "THE GRAND OLD PARTY"

revived partially. But, in order to witness a political comeback, it needs to distance itself from dynastic dilemma- limitations and realign its social and cultural ideology to abstain the political negativity and make a strong connection with aspirational India!

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