Trans. Inst. Indian Geographers
Vol. 30, No. 1, 2008

Haryana Assembly Poll 2005 – A Geographer's Perspective

Sachinder Singh

Abstract

The paper analyses the electoral scene of 2005 Haryana assembly elections which gave the Indian National Congress a thumping majority. The assembly constituency wise analysis of the Congress vote indicates low level of stability for the party vote and its inability to win a seat consecutively for years. The return of the Congress to the seat of power in the state is not about the positive mandate for the party rather it has more to do with the voters' rejection of the Chautala government. The Jats have played a decisive role in ousting the Chautala rule.

Introduction

The electoral contests for gaining the seat of power in Haryana have largely been restricted between the Indian National Congress (the Congress) and the fronts organized and extended by late Devi Lal and his immediate family. In terms of electoral support base, the former is regarded as an aggregative party, whereas, the latter as a rural, peasants based party. Being an agrarian economy, the peasants have an important place and which party they vote for in an election has a strong bearing on the formation of the state government. Nonetheless, barring the 1996 assembly elections, when Bansi Lal led the Haryana Vikas Party (HVP) had emerged as a force to reckon with, both the parties were able to win more than 70 per cent of the total seats in the elections held since 1977. Similarly, both the parties got more than 60 per cent vote in majority of the elections (Table 1). The all-India character and aggregative nature of drawing vote across different socio-economic cleavages of the Congress on the one hand and the serious electoral challenges posed to it by the regional formations of Late Devi Lal in the past and his son Om Parkash Chautala in the present, on the other, makes the study important.

The victory for the Congress in the recently held 2005 assembly elections in Haryana was a landslide one. Out of the total 90 member Assembly, the party won as many as 67 seats. Barring the Janata Party experiment of 1977, this has been the most spectacular electoral performance by any political party since the first assembly election held in the state in 1967. The Congress party's earlier most impressive performance was in the year 1972 when, riding the "*garibi hatao*" wave, the party had polled 46.9 percent vote and won 52 seats. In terms of percent vote polled, this has not been the best election for the party. In 1969 and 1972, the percent vote polled in favour of the party was higher than that in 2005. The party's major political rival, the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), which had contested the 2005 election without Devi Lal for the first time, could win only

Table 1: Percent Vote and Seats won by the Congress and the INLD in Haryana (1977-2005 Assembly Elections)

Political Party	Assembly Elections						
	1977	1982	1987	1991	1996	2000	2005
CONGRESS							
Per cent Vote	17.15	37.58	29.18	33.71	20.80	31.25	42.5
Seats Won	03	36	05	51	09	21	67
INLD*							
Per cent Vote	46.7	23.86	38.88	22.33	20.57	29.64	26.8
Seats Won	75	31	60	16	24	47	09
CONGRESS + INLD							
Per cent Vote	63.32	61.44	68.06	56.04	41.37	60.89	69.3
Seats Won	78	67	65	67	33	68	76
Seats Won (%)	86.67	74.44	72.22	74.44	36.67	75.55	84.44

** Part of Janata Party in 1977, contested the election as Lok Dal in 1982 and 1987, Janata Party in 1991, Samta Party in 1996 and Indian National Lok Dal in 2000 and 2005.*

9 seats. It also includes the Gauranda seat from where the INLD candidate, Rekha Rani, won the seat by a meagre margin of 21 votes. So serious was the defeat of the INLD that the party failed to win any seat in 13 of the total 19 districts of the state. The party could win only one seat each from the districts of Karnal, Sonepat, Gurgaon, and Fatehabad; two seats from Yamunanagar and three seats from INLD chief home district of Sirsa. It is important to note that out of the total 9 victories, 6 were from SC reserved seats.

Methodology

The electoral analysis of the Congress has been carried out for all the 90 assembly constituencies and for the last seven assembly elections (i.e. 1977, 1982, 1987, 1991, 1996, 2000, and 2005). The line graph and bar diagrams are used to show the trend in percent polled and seats won by the Congress. The co-efficient of variation values are calculated for measuring the level of heterogeneity in the party vote. The choropleth method is used to show the patterns of victories for different political parties in 2005 and that of the Congress from 1977 to 2005. The technique of factor analysis is used to measure the electoral stability score for the Congress. The technique is such that if the vote pattern for a political party is exactly the same in every election, in that case the first factor in the analysis will account for 100 percent of the variance. Therefore, the first factor provides a sort of percentage geographical stability score. The technique is applied in the case of only those 83 constituencies where the party had fielded its candidates in all the seven elections. For that matter, the seven constituencies, viz. Beri, Jind, Tosham, Bhattu Kalan, Hisar, Fatehabad, and Adampur, were not included.

The Electoral performance of the Congress: Then and Now

(a) Variations in the percent vote of the Congress

The constituency-wise analysis of the Congress percent vote from 1977 to 2005 indicates inconsistency in the

party voting. Its average percent vote ranged in between a minimum of 18.52 per cent in 1977 to a maximum of 41.96 percent in 2005. The average percent vote of the party from 1977 to 2005 and the nature of swing in the vote from one election to the subsequent one clearly indicate its flip-flop nature. However, the election for 2005 is not only significant for the Congress in terms of seats won but also in the fact that its flip-flop trend of percent vote polled since 1977 has changed for the first time (Fig. 1).

The application of factor analysis on the constituency-wise percent vote of the party has yielded that the first factor has explained 28.27 percent variation in the party vote. This clearly indicates a very low level of stability in the party vote pattern in the state. This result is in consonance with the trend of the percent average vote and co-efficient of variation values of the party in the last seven assembly elections (Table 2).

(b) Variations in the Seats Won by the Congress

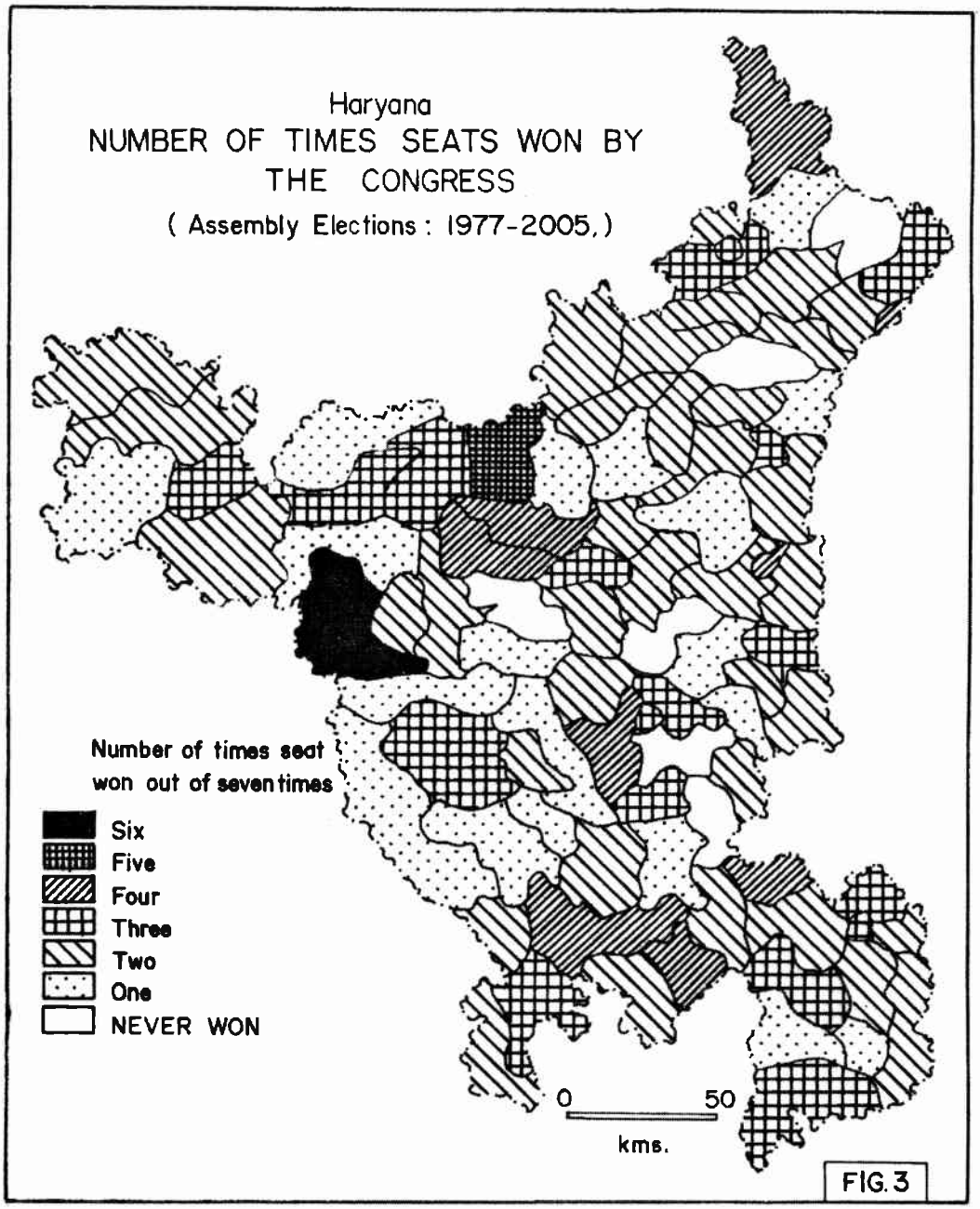
Electoral Scene: 2005 Assembly Election

The Congress in this election won 67 seats, maximum ever by the party in the state (Fig. 2). The party won all the seats in the districts of Ambala, Panchkula, Kurukshetra, Panipat, and Bhiwani. It won all the seats but one in the districts of Fatehabad, Hisar, Jind, Karnal, Rohtak, Jhajjar, Rewari and Faridabad. Its performance was equally good in the districts of Kaithal (won 3 out of 5) and Sonepat (4 out of 6). The party performance was not up to the mark in the districts of Gurgaon (won 2 out of 5), Mahendargarh (1 out of 3), Sirsa (2 out of 5), and Yamunanagar (2 out of 5).

It is interesting to note that in this election, the party has won as many as 13 constituencies for the first time since 1977 (Fig. 2). These include: Narayangarh of Ambala; Indri and Asandh of Karnal; Kalayat of Kaithal; Gohana of Sonepat; Jhajjar of Jhajjar; Badra, Dadri, Mundhal Khurd, Loharu and Bawani Khera of Bhiwani; Hansi of Hisar, and Bhattu Kalan of Fatehabad. Barring Asandh and Bhattu Kalan, these constituencies are in existence since 1967, i.e., the first assembly election in the state. However, the party could win the seats of Narayangarh, Gohana, Badra, Mundhal Khurd, and Loharu after a gap of 33 years and that of Kalayat, Jhajjar, Dadri, Bawani Khera and Hansi after 37 years.

Table 2: General Characteristics of the Congress Vote in Haryana (1977-2005 Assembly Elections)

General Characteristics	Assembly Elections						
	1977	1982	1987	1991	1996	2000	2005
Average Vote (in percent)	18.52	37.35	28.89	33.38	20.25	31.01	41.96
Standard Deviation(in percent)	10.37	9.96	9.36	12.51	9.89	14.45	12.15
Co-efficient of Variation (in percent)	55.99	26.66	32.39	37.47	48.84	46.59	28.95
Range of Vote (in percent)	42.63	51.79	43.15	61.13	54.00	65.89	60.70



Electoral Scene: 1977-2005 Assembly Elections

The time-series analysis of the seats won by the Congress from 1977 to 2005 (7 elections) reveals that the party lacks consistency in terms of winning a seat regularly. The data reveals that the number of constituencies where the party candidates

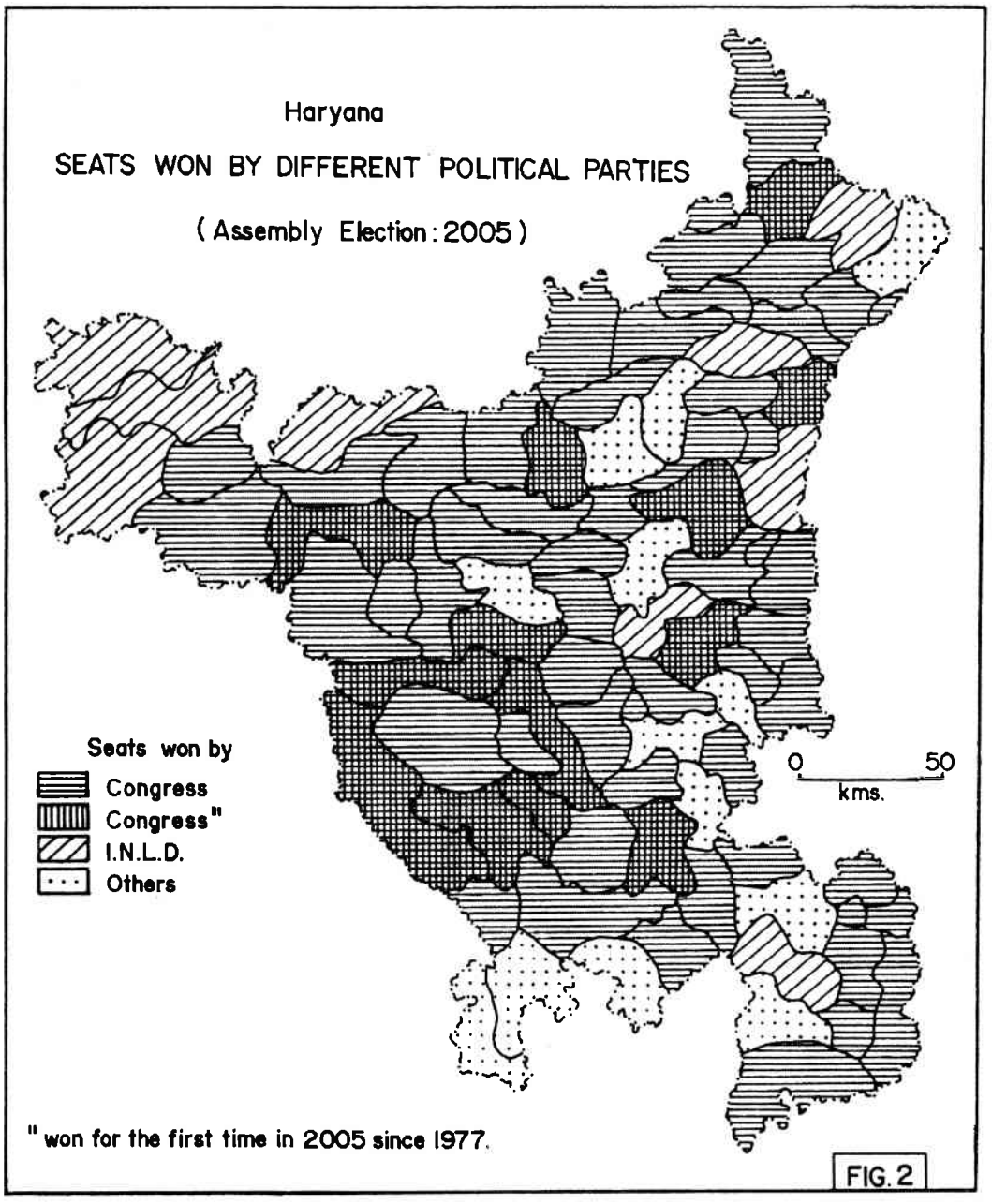


FIG. 2

won their seats more times (out of 7 times) is few in number (Fig. 3). There are 19 seats won by the party only once. Out of these, 13 seats were won for the first time in 2005. Among the remaining six seats, the seat of Ratia (SC) was won by the party way back in 1982, and that of Pai, Rohat, Hathin, Nuh, and Ellanabad in 1991. There were other 36 seats won by the party twice only. These include 11 seats won by the party

only in 1982 and 2005; 11 seats in 1991 and 2005; 7 seats in 1982 and 1991; 4 seats in 2000 and 2005; 2 seats in 1996 and 2005, and one seat in 1991 and 2000. There is not even a single constituency in the state won by the party in all the last seven elections. It is only the Adampur seat, which the party has been winning consecutively since 1982 (i.e. 6 times). The party also won the Narwana seat 5 times. There were 9 and 18 constituencies won by the party 4 and 3 times respectively.

It is important to note that despite such an overwhelming performance of the party in 2005, there are still six constituencies without the Congress representation since 1977. These are Sudhaura (SC), Radaur (SC), Hassangarh, Badli, Baroda (SC), and Narnaund.

What Went Wrong for Chautala Government?

Unlike some of the states of Indian federal union, where assembly elections were held recently, in Haryana, "development" was not the deciding factor in the election. Voter across the party lines accepted the fact that there was unprecedented development by the Chautala government. This fact was also highlighted by Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in its post-poll survey (appeared in The Hindu, 06.03.2005). It was found that as many as 73 percent polled felt that despite its shortcoming; the Chautala government did work for the development of the state. This fact was accepted by even majority of the Congress and the BJP voters also. All along this, majority of the voters across the party lines, agree that the interaction of Chautala with people was better than other chief-ministers, also that the government had helped the farmers, and the conditions of roads have improved under the Chautala government.

Despite good track record in matter of development, the INLD leadership failed to get advantage from this fact. This is more interesting as the voters were well aware that there was clear-cut rivalry within the Congress; there were differences and resentment regarding the way the party tickets were distributed and lack of unanimity for the post of chief-minister. Despite all these, the resentment against the Chautala regime was so deep that the Congress swept across the state territory and Chautala failed to get even the status of the leader of the opposition in the Assembly, for want of required number of his party legislators.

In terms of seats won, although the winning tally for the INLD in this election came down to all times low of nine seats, the party is not out of the electoral scene completely. This could be judged from the fact that the decline in the percent vote polled by the party in this election was less than three percent than the preceding election i.e. from 29.64 percent in 2000 to 26.8 percent in 2004. The inter-constituency variation in the votes polled by the party had ranged from 2.67 percent in Mewla Maharajpur to 60.01 percent in Rori. In 13 constituencies the party had polled more than 40 percent votes each (in one of these the vote share was more than 60 percent). In 25 constituencies it had polled between 30 to 40 percent. There were, however, as many as 51 constituencies, where it had polled less than 30 percent. These include 6 and 3 constituencies where it had polled

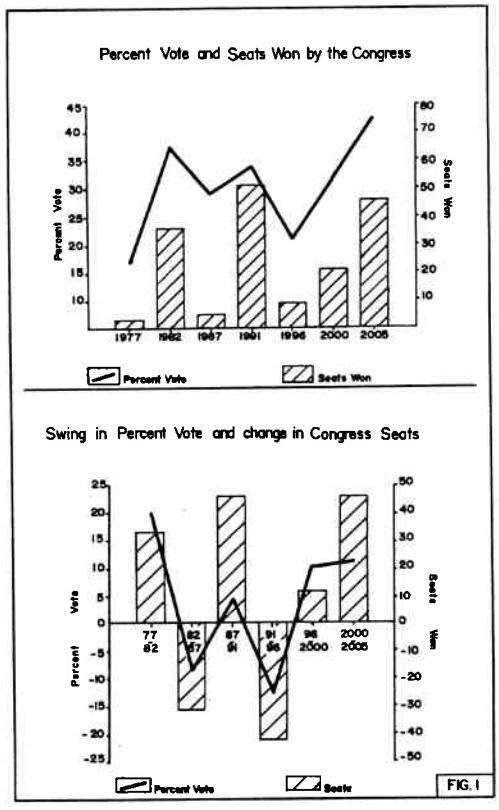


FIG. I

between 5 to 10 percent, and below 5 percent respectively. It is interesting to note that excepting the nine seats where the INLD candidates were returned to their seats, there were as many as 50 constituencies where the party candidates were declared runners-up. These include 45 constituencies which were won by the Congress, 2 by Independents, and one each by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In total there were 12 constituencies each where the margin of defeat for the INLD candidates was by less than 5 percent, and 5 to 10 percent respectively. In 8 constituencies it was between 10 to 15 percent and in 18 it was 15 percent and more. The 50 constituencies where the INLD candidates were declared runners-up in 2005 elections included those 26 seats, which the party had won in the 2000 election.

What went wrong with the Chautala leadership, despite doing so much development work? How could the INLD be so thoroughly routed, especially in the Jat heartland that was an exclusive preserve of Devi Lal? There are numerous theories regarding the origins of Jats. Presently, they dominate the rural hinterland in a radius of about 300 km from the national capital, Delhi. The recent Haryana Assembly elections mark the decline and probable fall of a political dynasty founded by Devi Lal, a formidable peasant leader. The policies of his successor Om Prakash Chautala, however, exasperated the electorate so much that they were just obdurate to defeat him in the electoral battle. The way majority of the Jats have voted against Chautala – the leader of mainly rural based Jats dominant party – and voted for the Congress in this assembly poll verdict is certainly a turning point in the history of state politics. This may have strong bearings on the future electoral contests in the state.

The INLD under the leadership of Devi Lal had a strong base among Haryana peasantry, especially its Jat component. As per the CSDS's post-poll survey, the party won only one seat out of 35 in what the CSDS characterized as "Rural Jatland". Out of nine seats won by the INLD, six are reserved constituencies; the remaining three are represented by a Meo, a Rajput and a Jat each. Ironically enough, Om Prakash Chautala, the party supreme, is the solitary Jat legislator now. In 17 urban seats INLD has drawn a blank.

It will be, however, too early to say that the Jats have permanently shifted to the Congress. In this election, their shift was more linked to their rejection of Chautala than their commitment to the Congress. However, whatever is the case, this certainly is a turning point in the state politics. The reasons being that majority of the Jats in the state are known for their unswerving loyalty to Chottu Ram. The story goes back to the pre-Independence period when the Jats were organized and mobilized by Chottu Ram through his Unionist party – a kind of anti-Congress movement.

Sir Chottu Ram had started his political career as the Congressman. He was the first president of the District Congress Committee, Rohtak from 1916 to 1920. It was in 1920 that he decided to resign from the Congress and joined hands with a notable Muslim leader Sir Fazl-i-Hussain in 1923. He was against the idea of non-cooperation as adopted by the Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi for fighting British Imperialism. He was of the view that as the peasants were ignorant, illiterate, and poor, they could not participate in a movement they did not understand. He also believed that is was not possible for them to remain non-violent. He fought throughout his life for the rights of zamindars (agriculturalists), particularly their problem of indebtedness. The political platform he formed worked across the religion lines. Many Muslim peasants used to call him "Chottu Khan". (Singh 1993, and Lal 1997).

Since then, majority of the Jats treats the Congress as an anti-Jats party. It is a consequence of this legacy that the number of statues of Devi Lal that came up all along highways offended the Jats. Similarly, prefixing the name of Devi Lal with the names of thermal plant, university, engineering college, parks and other buildings was also detested by many. In many cases, people had shown their resentment on the proposals of installing bigger size statues of Devi Lal near the statues of Chottu Ram. This irked the (rural) electorate who treated these policies of the government as a systematic effort towards dismantling the image of Chottu Ram.

During the Chautala's rule, the link between people, their elected representatives and the decision makers in the government got weakened. The decision making of almost everything was decided by the chief-minister's office. This was realized by the electorate that in the INLD government, none other than the Chautala family has any say. Even the party MLAs and other functionaries also strengthened this impression. They never hesitated in expressing their helplessness before their supporters. This left the citizens exasperated and embittered. In many constituencies during the election, it was a common sight to see the INLD candidates and their supporters being ridiculed by the voters during electioneering for their helplessness and ineffectuality in the power structure.

It was also in the news that there were numerous visits of the INLD legislators to other states of India and other countries of the world in the name of attracting foreign direct investment and study about planning etc. at the state expenses. How much the state is benefited from these visits? Any study focused on the cost-benefit analysis

of these visits can be useful contribution in understanding the state welfare policies.

The way the state recruiting agencies give employment is an important indicator to define the character of the state bureaucracy. In Haryana, these agencies have suffered a tremendous loss of trustworthiness in the last few years. In public perception, every post carries a price tag and merit is overlooked. This led to a deep sense of unhappiness and bitterness among the educated youth in the state. The manner in which the members and chairman of the Haryana Public Service Commission were nominated, and re-nominated by the state government at the fag end of its tenure had also raised the eyebrows of many.

Lastly, the law and order situation worsened beyond measure. There was alarming increase in murder, rape, kidnapping for ransom and other such heinous crimes. The Congress has come to power in Haryana after a prolonged period. The party was encouraged by its unexpected success in the 2004 parliamentary elections when it had won nine out of 10 seats. It will be interesting to note that the 2004 parliamentary election was a big gain for the party as it drew blank in the previous parliamentary election of 1999. However, the party leadership must understand that it is not a positive mandate for them. It could not be expected from a party which was chronically faction ridden. Majority of the times, its leaders were more interested in settling scores with each other than opposing the then chief-minister on vital issues. It was the result of all this that the party had failed to project its chief-ministerial candidate. Different areas projected different prospective chief-ministers. In Rohtak, it was Bhupinder Singh Hooda; in Jind, Birender Singh and Randeep Singh Surjewala, and in Hisar it was Bhajan Lal. In fact, it was the total rejection of the Chautala's clan politics that propelled the Congress into power with a thunderous victory.

Conclusion

The electoral results of 2005 assembly elections results came as a shock for the INLD. It was more particularly so as the party had failed to perform in its traditional Jat belt. The thumping majority to the faction ridden Congress was an unexpected gift by the voters to the party rather than what it deserves for its work. After the merger of the Haryana Vikas Party into the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party yet to strike the Haryana rural electoral landscape, the Congress was the only viable political outfit to reap the electoral harvest. The detailed assembly constituency wise analysis of the Congress vote for the last seven assembly elections in the state indicates a low level of stability. Similarly the party's ability to win a seat consecutively for years is also low. Answer to the question whether the Congress will able to retain the newly entered Jats vote in its vote bank or not will come only through the future electoral contests.

References

Lal, Hardwari (28 June, 1997), "*Sir Chhotu Ram: Peasants Great Champion*", The Tribune.

Singh, Ranbir (24 November, 1993), "*Sir Chhotu Ram, Congress and the Unionist Party*", The Tribune.

Sachinder Singh
Department of Geography
M.D. University, ROHTAK – 124 001.
e-mail: sachindersingh@rediffmail.com