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Geopolitical Dynamics and Voter Behavior: Insights from the 2023 Rajasthan Assembly Elections in Bundi

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ABSTRACT: Political geography is the study of geographical factors dealing with the organization, conduction and decision making of election process. Thus, we could say that it studies the spatial patterns of voting trends of the voters and how this behavior is affected by the ongoing scenario at the national or local level. In a multiparty democracy, election campaign is the initial step to gain power. In a democracy, being able to vote remains the most vital fundamental right. A proper electoral process is the basis of democracy. Elections are the sole recognized means of getting representation in the modern era. In this way, accountability for government is enhanced and representation is meaningful. Thus, electoral management plays a major role in the determination of the character and state of the nation's politics. In the aforementioned perspective, the current study problem emphasizes the voting patterns, voting behaviours, and their geographical intensity in various polling booths of Bundi assembly constituency.

KEYWORDS: Political Geography, Election, Voting behavior, Polling booths

I. INTRODUCTION

Political geography is a field that is changing quickly. There has long been discussion among political scientists, sociologists, and geographers addressing election study. Geographers' main objective is to illustrate the breadth of their multifaceted studies of voting using the concept of regional bias. Since political geography incorporates all studies of the spatial arrangements of societies that have some sort of association to the state, it is studied within the larger field of human geography. Elections represent the main mechanism by which society determines its favored form of leadership. They create a pathway to facilitate interaction between the "ruled" and the "rulers". In a country of colonial past, it is possible that certain villages or regions vote in favor of a particular ideology or party while certain communities vote entirely to other party. These voting behaviors of the electorates often form trends which is interesting to study. In India not much research has been initiated on the political behavior of the electorates. The authors being the students of Geography have taken Bundi assembly constituency as the area of research as this constituency has almost sent a Brahmin candidate to power, though the Brahmin population is not in majority.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

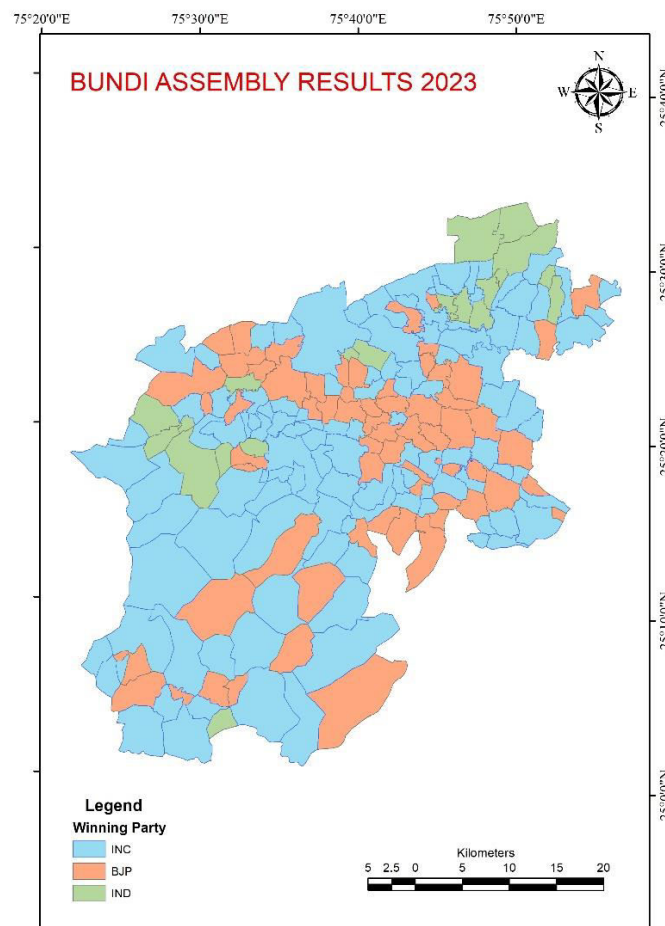
Not many studies have been conducted in India on electoral geography. The spatio temporal analysis of voter turnout and the voting trends in West Bengal assembly elections from 2006 to 2016 were studied by Rahman and Khatun. Dr R Chaturvedi performed his research on the voting trends on the reserved seats of Rajasthan for 2018 assembly elections. Yadav, Khan and Sharma undertook a study on the Bundi Municipal elections looking into the factors affecting the voting pattern and also analyzed the educational qualifications of the contestants. Seema in her research analyzed the evolution and development of Delhi assembly. Similarly voting behavior in Himachal Pradesh elections was analyzed by Mehta and Sekhon. Yadav and Birla undertook the research of Hindoli assembly seat of Rajasthan in 2024, examining the voting trends of electorates across various polling settlements.

III. OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the study is to look for the spatial patterns of voting during the 2023 Rajasthan assembly elections particularly of Bundi constituency. The data used for the research is secondary data provided by the Rajasthan election commission on its website. The data is tabulated and then plotted on the map to show the spatial patterns.

IV. STUDY AREA

Bundi assembly constituency comprises of Bundi and Talera tehsils of Bundi district of Rajasthan. The constituency is located in the South eastern part of the district and is a general seat with 20.03 percent ST voters, SC voters account for 19.02 percent while 9.7 percent voters are Muslims. The community wise breakup of the constituency apart from ST, SC and Muslims is as follows, Gurjars are 6.1 percent, Saini or Malis are 4.1 percent, Brahmins are 3.7 percent, Sikhs are 1.8 percent and Jains account to 1.5 percent of the total electorates. Here it is interesting to note that though the figure of Brahmins is meager still the constituency has sent a Brahmin candidate to the assembly. Of the last seven assembly elections the MLAs were Sh. Om Prakash Sharma, Smt. Mamta Sharma (twice in 1998 and 2003), Sh. Ashok Dogra (thrice in 2008, 2013 and 2018) and Sh.Hari Mohan Sharma (2023) are all Brahmins.



Map 1: Bundi Assembly Results 2023

There are 315 polling booths in the constituency spread across 198 polling settlements. The Indian national congress won in 115 settlements (Map 1), the Bhartiya janata party in 64 and the independent candidate took a lead in 19 settlements.

Table 1: Comparison of Percent Votes received in Bundi Election (1998 – 2023)

Year/ Political Party	INC	BJP
1998	62.5	36.47
2003	40.88	36.6
2008	34.23	42.18
2013	34.7	49.8
2018	44.38	44.7
2023	41.88	34.01

Source: Election Commission Rajasthan Website

Table 1 shows the comparison of votes received by the two dominant political parties in the Bundi assembly election. In 1998, the Indian national Congress secured an overwhelming 62.25 percent of votes casted. After 1998, no political party crossed the fifty percent mark. In the 2023 election, the Indian national Congress won the seat securing 41.88 percent votes while the candidate of the Bhartiya janata party got 34.01 percent votes. The independent candidate again a Brahmin Rupesh Sharma managed to secure 16.6 percent of votes. He was a rebel Bhartiya janata party candidate and he could easily take the responsibility of Bhartiya janata party’s loss. Had he not contested the election, the Bhartiya janata party could have easily retained the seat for the fourth consecutive term.

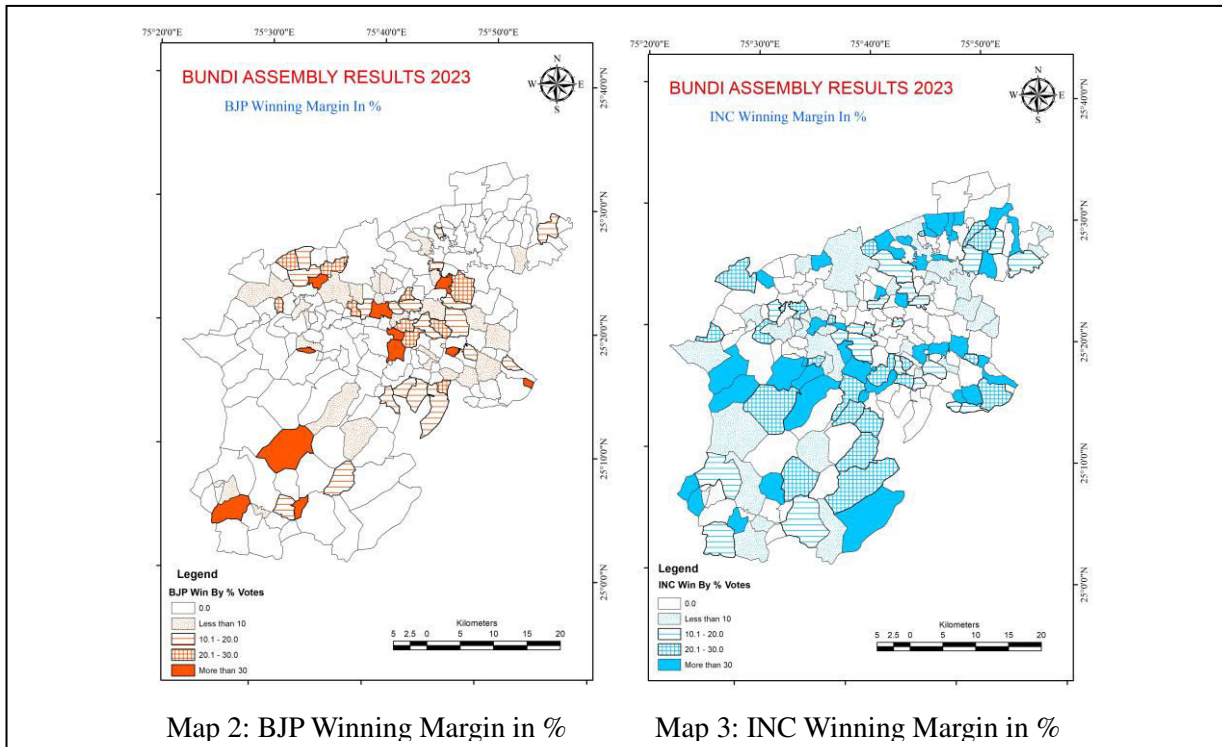
Table 2: Party wise votes polled in polling settlements

Vote percent	INC	BJP	Ind
0-10	4	13	73
10-20	15	38	69
20-30	27	40	28
30-40	42	46	13
40-50	50	34	8
50-60	34	19	5
60-70	18	5	1
70-80	8	1	1
80-90	0	1	0
90-100	0	1	0

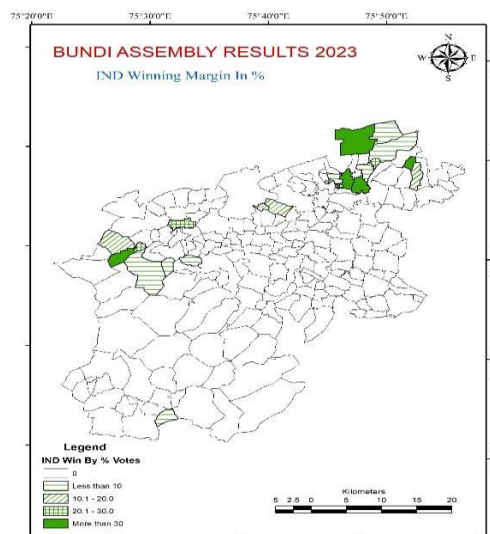
Source: Calculated by the authors

The Bhartiya janata party secured more than 70 percent in three settlements (Map 2) that is Chanpuriya (92.4), Kanan (80.7) and in Bathwara (70.4). All three settlements are traditionally Bhartiya janata party’s strongholds as the party did remarkably well in 2018 elections as well in securing over 80 percent votes.

The Indian national congress no doubt did extremely good in booths having large number of Muslim electorates especially in Bundi city and in Jameetpura (Map 3). The 8 settlements where they garnered over 70 percent votes are Thari (79.7), Dhola ki Jhonpariyan (77.3), Gogpura (76.2), Ganeshpura (75.4), Javti Khurd (72.3), Bartabavdi (72.2), Rajwas (71.5) and Gopalniwas (70.9). Of these Rajwas, Dhola ki Jhonpariyan, Gogpura, Bartabavdi and Thari are the Congress strongholds where their performance was the same even in the 2018 assembly elections.



The independent candidate Rupesh Sharma secured 16.6 percent votes but he managed to win in 19 settlements (Map 4). He even secured more than 50 percent votes in 7 settlements and these are Bhairupura Ojha (73.3), Mohanpura (64.3), Janvra ki Jhonpariya (59.3), Lohli (57.9), Guwari (56), Gopalpura (55.6) and Baldevpura (51.2). He even stood at number 2 in 30 settlements, thus giving a good fight to both the parties but despite managing the Bhartiya Janata party candidates' defeat, he even dented the strongholds of the Indian national congress in Bhairupura Ojha, Gopalpura and Baldevpura. The young generation or rather the youth of ABVP joined hands with Rupesh Sharma as the three times sitting MLA of the BJP faced anti-incumbency from within his own party.



Map 4: Independent Winning Margin in %

V. CONCLUSIONS

Electoral geography of Bundi assembly constituency suggests an important vision on the intense relationship among voting behavior, political mindset, and social structure. Bundi constituency has almost chosen a Brahmin candidate every time despite them being in a minority implies that caste and public participation play a major role in the elections in India. The election results of 2023 tell a story that party strongholds could be upset by strong independent candidates such as Rupesh Sharma. This is why it becomes important to analyze spatial voting patterns as this actually clarifies the role of castes in the Indian elections even today.

It is no doubt that the minority community always sides with the Indian national congress and the results vindicate this but the independent candidate Rupesh Sharma was surprisingly able to eat away votes of the Bhartiya Janata party and was smart enough to make a dent in the Congress bastion as he was young and energetic and easily connected with the youth. Anti-incumbency worked against the three times sitting MLA of the Bhartiya Janata party.

Bundi constituency is just a small picture of the Rajasthan election as all factors working here are almost same elsewhere, with slight changes. Thus, electoral studies make us understand the intricate relationships among voting behavior, caste, independents and local issues prevailing in the state.

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