

16th Lok Sabha Elections 2014 in Punjab: Emergence of triangular fight in Punjab Politics

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Abstract

Democracy is recognized all over the world as the best form of government. Elections are the foundation and bed rock on which democracy stands. They lie at the heart of democratic process and provide opportunities for the expression of popular will. India is one of the largest democracies in the world. After independence, India has successfully undergone many elections to elect the representatives to the parliament as well as state assemblies. The elections to the Lok Sabha (The Popular House) have been held for sixteen times. The 16th Lok Sabha elections 2014, for the first time in the electoral history of Punjab witnessed a triangular fight between three political parties i.e., SAD-BJP alliance, Congress and Aam Admi Party (AAP). This time, the newly formed Aam Admi Party created political history in the state of Punjab by destabilizing Congress Party and SAD-BJP alliance by winning 4 Lok Sabha seats. Again in Punjab Vidhan Sabha elections which were held in Feb-March 2017, the newly formed Aam Admi Party stood as main opposition party in Punjab Vidhan Sabha by capturing 22 seats and old SAD-BJP alliance could not manage to secure even the seats to sit in opposition. Thus, the present paper is an attempt to analyze the non-performance of the old SAD-BJP alliance, Congress party and performing exceedingly well by Aam Admi Party in this elections.

Key Words: SAD-BJP, AAP, INC, Majha, Malwa, Doaba, Anti-Incumbency

In the 16th Lok Sabha elections 2014, initially it seemed that it would be a direct fight in the state of Punjab between the traditional rivals of politics i.e. SAD-BJP alliance and the Congress Party. But the excellent performance of newly formed Aam Admi Party made it a triangular contest between SAD-BJP alliance, Congress and Aam Admi Party. Though the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) contested this election without any electoral alliance and put up its candidates in all Lok Sabha seats, it failed to open even its account in spite of the highest percentage of schedule caste population in the state particularly in Doaba region. Manpreet Singh Badal (President of People's Party of Punjab now merged in Congress party), nephew of Parkash Singh Badal, who left SAD in October 2010 due to ideological differences with his uncle S. Parkash Singh Badal, the then Chief Minister of Punjab and formed a new party i.e. People's Party of Punjab (PPP), contested this election in alliance with Congress Party from Bathinda Lok Sabha seat against Harsimrat Kaur Badal, daughter in-law of Parkash Singh Badal.

The 15th Lok Sabha elections were held in the state of Punjab in April 2009. The Congress Party lost these elections by a big margin. The Congress secured only 2 out of 13 Lok Sabha seats from Punjab. The Shiromani Akali Dal contested these elections in alliance with BJP and got 8 seats. The BJP got 3 seats out of 4 it contested.

Approximately after three years of these elections, the 14th Punjab Vidhan elections, held in Feb-March 2012 reversed the trend of the history of electoral politics of Punjab by beating anti-incumbency factor in the state. The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), the main regional political party of the state and Bhartiya Janata Party (SAD-BJP) alliance has created, this time, a significant political history in the state of Punjab by defeating the Congress Party for second consecutive term. The SAD-BJP alliance won 68 Vidhan Sabha seats. The Congress won only 46 assembly seats in these elections. Consequently, the SAD-BJP coalition government under the Chief Ministership of Parkash Singh Badal was formed. Badal led SAD-BJP coalition which took over the reign of the government in the state after 2007 assembly elections showed very little performance in 2014 Lok Sabha elections because of anti-incumbency and other factors.

The 16th Lok Sabha elections in Punjab were held on 4th April 2014 for all 13 Lok Sabha constituencies along with the rest of the country. The total number of voters in this election was 1.95 crore. Out of these, 92 lakhs were females and 1.02 crore were male. 9.35 lakh voters casted their votes first time in this election. Thus, the polling percentage was 66.4% in this election. A total 253 including 19 women candidates contested this election. 24300 EVM used, 13,582 polling stations and 22060 polling booths were setup. 2442 polling stations were declared hyper sensitive and 4632 sensitive.

Performance of Political Parties in 2014 Lok Sabha Elections

The electoral performance of political parties in terms of seats won and votes polled in 2014 Lok Sabha election in Punjab has been shown in the following table;

Name of Parties	2009			2014			Gain/Loss	
	Seats Contested	Seats Won	%	Seats Contested	Seats Won	%	Seats	%
SAD	10	4	33.85	10	4	20.30	0	-13.55
BJP	3	1	10.06	3	2	08.70	+1	-1.36
AAM ADMI PARTY	-	-	-	13	4	30.40	+4	+30.40
INC	13	8	45.23	13	2	33.10	-5	-12.13
BSP	13	0	5.75	13	0	05.23	-3	-0.52
CPI	2	0	00.33	5	0	00.51	0	+0.18
CPI(M)	1	0	00.14	1	0	00.13	0	-0.1
SAD(M)	3	0	00.36	9	0	00.38	0	+0.2
IND and Others	173	0	04.28	184	0	01.25	0	-3.03

Source:- Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Punjab, Chandigarh, 2009 & 2014 Lok Sabha Elections of Punjab.

The above table reveals that, in terms of seats, the SAD alone got 4 Lok Sabha seats contested by it in this election. The SAD also won 4 Lok Sabha seats out of 10 it had contested in previous Lok Sabha election which was held in 2009. The BJP which could win 1 seat in 2009 Lok Sabha election won 2 Lok Sabha seats contested by it in this election. The Aam Admi Party which contested the Lok Sabha election first time since its emergence performed well and won 4 seats in this election. The Congress which got 8 Lok Sabha seats in 2009 Lok Sabha election could win only 2 seats in this election. All the other political parties either national or state level like the BSP, the CPI, the CPI (M) and the SAD (M) could not open their account in terms of seats in this election.

In terms of percentage of votes, the SAD secured 20.30 % votes in this Lok Sabha election, while it had secured 33.85 % votes in 2009 Lok Sabha election. The BJP secured 8.70% votes in this Lok Sabha election while it had secured 10.06 % votes in 2009 Lok Sabha election. The Congress party secured 33.10 % votes in

this election although it had obtained 45.23 % votes in 2009 Lok Sabha election. The Aam Admi Party obtained 30.40 % votes in this election. The BSP secured 5.23 % votes in this election although it had obtained 5.75 % votes in 2009 Lok Sabha election. The CPI, the CPI (M) and SAD (M) secured 0.51%, 0.13 % and 0.38 % votes respectively in this election while they had secured 0.33%, 0.14% and 0.36 % votes respectively in 2009 Lok Sabha election. The independents and others secured 01.25% votes in this election while they had secured 04.28% votes in 2009 Lok Sabha election.

Assembly Segment – Wise Performance of Political Parties

The assembly segment-wise performance of political parties in this election has been shown in the following table;

Name of the Parties	Lok Sabha Seats Won	Assembly Segments Won
SAD	4	30
BJP	2	16
Aam Admi Party	4	33
INC	3	38
BSP	0	0
CPI	0	0
SAD (MANN)	0	0
INDEPEDENTS	0	0
TOTAL	13	117

Source:- Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Punjab, Chandigarh, 2014 Lok Sabha Elections of Punjab.

The above table indicates that the SAD won 4 Lok Sabha seats and led in 30 assembly segments, the BJP won 2 Lok Sabha seats and led in 16 assembly segments, the AAP won 4 Lok Sabha seats and led in 33 assembly segments and Congress won 3 Lok Sabha seats and led in 38 assembly segments. Though the BSP, the CPI, the SAD (M) and the others could not win any Lok Sabha seat and also not even opened their account in any of the assembly segments.

Region - Wise Electoral Performance of Political Parties

Punjab comprises of three distinct geographical regions- Majha (Districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur), Doaba (Districts of Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Nawanshar and Hoshiarpur) and Malwa (Districts of Patiala, Ludhiana, Fatehgarh Sahib, Faridkot, Ferozepur, Moga, Muktsar, Sangrur, Ropar, Bathinda, Mansa and Mohali).

The Majha region, which lies sandwiched between the Indo-Pak border in the north and river Beas in the south, contains 27 assembly segments. It is a mixture of Hindu, Sikh and Dalit population. The demographic character of this region made it a traditional stronghold of the Congress party.

The north eastern part of Punjab, Doaba which literally means the land between two rivers, accounts for 27 assembly segments, is traditionally a strong hold of the BSP and the Congress party because of its large concentration of Dalit population.

The southern part of Punjab, Malwa, is geographically the biggest and politically the most significant region of the state which accounts for 63 out of 117 assembly segments of Punjab. Though it has some pockets of Hindu population but it has traditionally remained a stronghold of the Akalis. Since 1966 all the Chief Ministers of the state except S. Darbara Singh hailed from Malwa region.

There are 117 assembly constituencies in the state. The delimitation process in assembly segments has changed the number of constituencies in the regions benefiting the already dominant Malwa by increasing four

seats: two each from Majha and Doaba. This development not only increased the electoral importance of the region but also became beneficial to the SAD politically because this region has been proved as a strong support base of Akali Dal since 1966.

The region-wise electoral performance of political parties in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections of Punjab is recorded in the following table;

Political Parties	Majha		Doaba		Malwa	
	Lok Sabha Seats Won	Assembly Segments Won	Lok Sabha Seats Won	Assembly Segments Won	Lok Sabha Seats Won	Assembly Segments Won
SAD	1	9	1	6	2	15
INC	1	7	1	13	1	18
BSP	-	-	-	-	-	-
BJP	1	11	1	5	-	-
AAP	-	-	-	3	4	30
CPI(M)	-	-	-	-	-	-
SAD (M)	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	3	27	3	27	7	63

Source:- Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Punjab, Chandigarh, 2014 Lok Sabha Elections of Punjab.

The above table indicates that in the Majha region, the INC won 1 Lok Sabha seat and secured 7 assembly segments, the SAD won 1 Lok Sabha seat and led in 9 assembly segments, the BJP won 1 Lok Sabha seat from this region and led in 11 assembly segments respectively.

The Doaba region, again repeated the same performance; the INC secured 1 Lok Sabha seat and led in 13 assembly segments, the SAD won 1 Lok Sabha seat and led in 6 assembly segments, the BJP won 1 Lok Sabha seat from this region and led in 5 assembly segments respectively. Though the AAP could not win any Lok Sabha seat but it led in 3 assembly segments in this region.

In the Malwa region, the SAD won 2 Lok Sabha seats and led in 15 assembly segments. The INC won 1 Lok Sabha seat and led in 18 assembly segments from this region. The AAP won 4 Lok Sabha seats and led in 30 assembly segments from this region. Neither the BSP nor the others secured even a single Lok Sabha seat and any of assembly segments from any of the region in this election.

Reasons for Performance of Political Parties in 2014 Lok Sabha Elections in Punjab

The main reasons for this performance of political parties were as under:-

1. Inter party tussle and acute factionalism in the various groups in the Congress party became the major reason for its defeat in 2014 Lok Sabha elections.
2. Lackluster and directionless campaign, organizational deficiencies and solvency in principles also became the reasons of the poor performance of the Congress party in these elections.
3. Change is the law of nature. The people wanted change after sometime. The SAD-BJP had been in power since 2007. Despite being in power, it failed to improve the economy of the state and control corruption. During this regime, people were facing many problems on almost all fronts. The non-performance of the SAD-BJP government in the state prior to these elections changed the opinion of the people in favour of the AAP. Therefore, incumbency was one of the reasons that led to its poor performance in this Lok Sabha election.
4. Lack of proper leadership in Punjab and not entering into any electoral alliance by BSP, CPI and CPM were the reasons for the poor performance of these parties in the elections.

5. Landslide victory of AAP in Delhi prior to these elections created environment in favour of AAP in Punjab. This was also one of the reasons for good performance of AAP in Punjab.
6. Youth factor was also a reason of the impressive victory of AAP in this election. Our post poll analysis indicated that the youth between the age of 18-25 was in favour of AAP in this election.

In conclusion, it can be said that at the time of 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the people of Punjab were not in favour of the Congress party, the SAD-BJP alliance and the other traditional political parties because of their non-performance in the government, so the people of Punjab thought why not the newly formed AAP should be given chance to form the government at the centre.

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