

Delhi Political Primer

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History of Delhi

From Ancient Times till 1947

The history of Delhi can be traced to the Harappan Civilization (as found from the recent excavations in the neighbouring region of Haryana). The Mahabharata also has some descriptions of Delhi (Indraprastha), the capital of the Pandavas.¹ Delhi has been a prominent political centre and has even served as the capital of various empires since ancient times. Stronghold of the ruling dynasties throughout history, modern-day Delhi has witnessed numerous invasions. It had a strategic geographical position that was in close proximity to the North-West front of India, the easiest route for maximum attacks as well as the rich, fertile lands of Malwa and Rajputana among others.

The first reference to the place named Delhi seems to have been made in the 1st century BCE when Raja Dhilu built a city near the site of the future Qutb Minar tower (in present-day southwestern Delhi) and named it for himself.² Following, all major empires ruling India from the Tomara dynasty (10 CE), the Delhi Sultanate (12 CE - 15 CE) to the Mughal Empire (15 CE - 17 CE) based their capitals in and around Delhi.

Delhi faced raids by the Marathas and Persians before it was brought under British rule in 1803. Delhi was then a part of the province of Punjab, annexed under the Government of India Act, of 1858³. The Britishers shifted their capital from Calcutta (Kolkata) to Delhi in 1911. Delhi not only became the capital of India but also was separated from Punjab, and became a Chief Commissioner's Province. Delhi was chosen as the new capital for several reasons. Suoro D Joardar, professor in the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi in his article *New Delhi: Imperial Capital to Capital of World's Largest Democracy* (2006) notes that besides the centrality and connectivity of Delhi, it also *"carried in the minds of the colonial rulers a symbolic value- as the old saying goes: 'he who rules Delhi, rules India'- a realisation of the Indian ethos, especially across northern and central India, enhanced during royal contact with the innumerable minor and major princes"*.⁴ Nonetheless, it was the uproar after the Partition of Bengal that served as the immediate catalyst supporting the decision. New Delhi therefore, emerged as the capital of British India with the complete construction of this new administrative centre in 1931 under the leadership of the key architect Sir Edwin Lutyens.

¹ Unknown, U. (2005). *ECONOMIC SURVEY OF DELHI, 2005-2006*.

² Rao, V. L. S. P., Sundaram, K., & Ram, V. (2024, July 25). *Delhi | History, population, Map, & Facts*. Encyclopedia Britannica.

³ Spear, T. P., Calkins, P. B., Alam, M., Subrahmanyam, S., Champakalakshmi, R., Allchin, F. R., Schwartzberg, J. E., Srivastava, A., Thapar, R., Dikshit, K., Raikar, S. P., & Wolpert, S. A. (2024, July 26). *India*

⁴ Roychowdhury, A. (2023, August 3). *Statehood for delhi: Tracing the history and legal journey since 1911*. The Indian Express.

Post-Independence Administrative History

After much debate, New Delhi was adopted as the capital of Independent India. With the Constitution of India coming into force in 1950, Delhi was designated as a part C state along with other Chief Commissioner's Provinces. In 1952, the Legislative Assembly of Delhi came into existence before it was abolished in 1956. The State Reorganisation Act of 1956 declared Delhi a Union Territory, eliminating the previous system of Part A, B, C, and D States. Subsequently, the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 was enacted which led to the formation of the Municipal Corporation.

In 1966, the Delhi Administration Act replaced the assembly with the Delhi Metropolitan Council with 56 elected and five nominated members with the Lt. Governor of Delhi as its head. The Council however had no legislative powers, only an advisory role in the governance of Delhi. This setup functioned until 1990. With the Constitution 69th Amendment Act, 1991⁵, the recommendations of the Sarkaria Committee (later called the Balakrishnan Committee) were given effect. Articles 239AA and 239AB were inserted in the Constitution: Delhi was given the title of "National Capital Territory of Delhi" and would be administered by a Lieutenant Governor (LG) who was to be appointed by the President. Under the same Act, in 1993, a Legislative Assembly was constituted that could legislate on all matters in the State and Concurrent List except for Public Order, Police, and Land.⁶ In addition, a Council of Ministers would be in place to aid and advise the Lt. Governor who was not bound by the former's advice. In case of a difference of opinion between the Lt. Governor and the Council of Ministers, the matter would be referred to the President.

Before understanding the electoral patterns of Delhi, a look into its administrative composition is essential. Delhi NCT (National Capital Territory of Delhi) is a Union Territory with a Legislative Assembly. It is India's largest city and has been divided into 11 districts for administrative purposes. New Delhi, one of these 11 districts, is the capital of Delhi NCT as well as the national capital of India. The Central government and the Central government-nominated New Delhi Municipal Corporation jointly administer it. There is also another term that is quite spoken of i.e, Delhi NCR (National Capital Region) – besides Delhi, it includes 24 districts of the neighbouring states of Rajasthan, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh such as Ghaziabad, Noida, Gurugram, Bharatpur among others.

Delhi NCT (referred to as Delhi hereafter) has grown into a major metropolitan city. Its expansion can be attributed partly to the influx of refugees (particularly Hindus and Sikhs) from Pakistan after the Partition, and partly to the migration from states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Bihar since the

⁵ (*The Constitution (Sixty-Ninth Amendment) Act, 1991* | *National Portal of India*, n.d.)

⁶ The Leaflet: July 24, 2024. (2018, June 26). *Delhi, a history of governance: A look back at the legal journey from 1858 to 2018 – the leaflet*.

1950s. The population of Delhi rose rapidly by 1980, leading to the birth of Delhi NCR. In 1985, the Enactment of National Capital Region Planning Board Act was passed to integrate the cities around Delhi to create a single cultural-economic region. Moreover, these cities had been largely influenced by Delhi as the capital city, and their culture and economy got linked to each other which called for synchronised land use and infrastructural development policies. This was made possible through the NCR.

Electoral History of Delhi Post-1947

Besides encouraging administrative changes, the migration led to a change in the caste and class profile which had an impact on the electoral politics in Delhi. The electoral history goes back to 1952 with the first Lok Sabha as well as Legislative Assembly Elections. The city has also witnessed municipal elections for a very long time. But, as Sanjay Kumar mentioned in his book, *Changing Electoral Politics in Delhi: from Caste to Class* (2013), the interest and focus on Delhi's electoral politics actually emerged among the people after Delhi became a state with 70 seats in the State Legislative Assembly.⁷

Congress emerged as the single largest party in the first 48-member legislative elections held in Delhi with 52.1% of the total votes polled. Shri Chaudhary Brahma Prakash became the first Chief Minister of Delhi. For the next decade, a Public Relations Committee headed by Shri Gopinath Aman with an Advisory Board looked after the administrative set-up in the capital. The Delhi Metropolitan Council and Executive Council were instituted in June 1966. An interim Metropolitan Council existed from September 1966 to February 1967 with Shri Jag Pravesh Chandra as Chairman.

The first elections were held in February 1967 followed by only four more in 1967, 1972, 1977, and 1983. In these elections, the Congress emerged victorious twice, while the Jana Sangh and the Janata Party had one chance each to govern the city. In the foremost elections, the Jana Sangh won 43 out of 56 seats, the Congress bagged 10, and the Republican Party two. In 1972, the Congress reached an understanding with the Communist Party and won 44 seats. The erstwhile Jana Sangh won only 4 seats. In 1977, the Janata Party scored a resounding victory, bagging 46 out of 56 seats. The Metropolitan Council was superseded in 1980, but elections were held three years later in 1983 with Congress winning 34 seats and the BJP 19. Although the term of the Metropolitan Council expired in 1988, it was extended by two years to enable the Government to decide on a new administrative set-up for Delhi. The National Front Government dissolved the Metropolitan Council and favoured the idea of elections under the new set-up. Later in 1991, the Narasimha Rao Government at the centre had an

⁷ *Changing Electoral Politics in Delhi: from Caste to Class* by Sanjay Kumar (2013)

amendment to the Constitution passed, giving Delhi an Assembly, which looked into the question of a new set-up for Delhi.⁸

Soon after Delhi became a state again, the first Assembly election was held in 1993 and the BJP formed the first government in Delhi. There have been six more Assembly elections in Delhi after that— in 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013, 2015, and 2020. The Congress was defeated during the first Assembly election, but after that, the Congress managed to win three consecutive Assembly elections making Smt. Sheila Dikshit the chief minister for 15 years. In the 2013 Delhi state elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (along with its pre-poll ally Shiromani Akali Dal) emerged as the single-largest party, winning 32 out of the 70 seats but fell short of an outright majority. The highest number of seats and vote share was secured by the Aam Aadmi Party in 2015 with 67 seats and a 54.34% vote share. Even in the 2020 election, AAP managed to secure 53.58% vote share. The Congress, however, could not bag even a single seat in the last two elections.⁹

Important Trends in Delhi's Political History

1. The Issue of the Demand for Statehood

One of the earliest altercations was based on the demand for Statehood. All political parties have tried to bring to the fore the issue of territoriality and governance in their election manifestos, occasionally banking on the issue of statehood to seek votes during elections.¹⁰

Given its limited mandate and advisory functions, the Metropolitan Council proved grossly inadequate to answer Delhi's growing crisis of governance in the mid-1970s. The Janata Government that came to power in 1977 by unseating Gandhi provided Delhi its first serious opportunity for statehood. Incidentally, the first Metropolitan Council was headed by Jana Sangh that was part of the Janata Government in 1977 and it passed several resolutions scrapping the then administrative set-up in early 1977. A second resolution was adopted in late 1977 by the third Metropolitan Council headed then by the Janata Party. Feeling politically cornered by the Jana Sangh activism on statehood, the Congress Party, which headed the fourth Metropolitan Council, jumped to the fray and moved four more proposals stating the need for a legislative assembly in the national capital.

Fast forward a decade later, and the statehood demand gained considerable traction in 1987 as opposition members made the demand for a legislative assembly nearly every day.[20] In this regard, the most vocal leader pushing for Delhi's full statehood was Shri Madan Lal Khurana, representing the

⁸ Kaushik, S. L.; Rama Patnayak (1995). *Modern Governments and Political Systems. Vol. 3*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications. p. 65.

⁹ [Statistical Reports - Election Commission of India](#)

¹⁰ Sahoo, N. (2018) 'Statehood for Delhi: Chasing a chimera,' *ORF*, 28 June.

Bharatiya Janata Party (renamed after Jana Sangh in 1980) in Delhi. After suffering a humiliating defeat in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP was desperately seeking to strengthen its position in the national capital, and the statehood demand perfectly suited its campaign to regain popular support. Indeed, statehood demand was one of the key contributing factors that propelled the BJP to political power in Delhi in 1993. This earned Madan Lal Khurana the title of '*Dilli Ka Sher* (Lion of Delhi)', and the rest is history.

Moreover, The Aam Aadmi Party or AAP, a brand new political party that won the assembly elections in 2013, remains the most vociferous supporter of complete statehood for Delhi. Ever since the party achieved a landslide victory in the Delhi legislative elections in 2015, it has been at loggerheads with the BJP government at the centre, particularly with the office of the LG, on issues of administrative jurisdictions and statehood for the national capital.

2. Migrant voters

Migration is said to have a lot of effect on electoral politics. It is often said to be one of the several factors underlying political change.¹¹ Though the period of 1971–90 witnessed large-scale migration, leading to a large migrant population significant to the city, they were not perceived as a vote bank by any political party. Looking at the predominance of the Congress in the city's politics one could, with common sense, imagine a strong support for the Congress amongst the migrant voters during that period. Except for the 1977 Lok Sabha election, when there was an anti-Emergency wave, the Congress had performed relatively well in most of the Lok Sabha elections. Notwithstanding, one did not see political parties attracting migrant voters by alluring them with migrant-favouring policies despite their living in clusters and concentrated in a few localities. One of the reasons for the same could be that they did not form sizable numbers, crucial for electoral contests.

However, affairs seem to have changed dramatically as well as drastically over the past couple of decades. Over time the migrants have formed a sizable proportion of voters in many Assembly constituencies and are seen as a powerful political force in the city's politics. Their relative importance in the city's politics is more than their proportionate share in Delhi's electorate mainly because of their concentration in a few Assembly constituencies, at times large enough to tilt the electoral outcome with their support. The role of migrant voters in the electoral politics of Delhi has been discussed in detail further.

¹¹ Gimpel, James G., and Jason E. Schuknecht. "Interstate Migration and Electoral Politics." *The Journal of Politics* 63, no. 1 (2001): 207–31.

3. Developmental Politics

The changed social profile of Delhi's voters (sizable proportions of lower-class-and-poor voters and migrants) and the nature of political preference guided largely on class lines had benefited the Congress which is considered relatively more popular amongst the poor and the lower-class voters. Whereas, the upper-class voters have voted for the BJP in big numbers. Though voters belonging to different castes like Punjabi Khatri, Jat, Dalit, Brahmin, or OBC have their political preferences and sizeable numbers of them vote for one or the other political party, they seem divided more on class lines rather than on caste lines, at least in the urban areas.

Thus, another trend reflected in Delhi in recent elections has been the focus on local issues; bread-and-butter issues have gained importance over national issues. Delhi's demographic structure in terms of class, caste, and community composition explains this trend. The poor, unemployed, and rural people are more concerned about their bread-and-butter issues compared to the big national issues. The scales are tilted in favour of the poor, uneducated, unemployed, and rural poor, and the large number of people living in slums and less developed colonies, who outnumber those living in posh, middle-class areas. Apart from the political preponderance of the regional actors in the state elections, it is also the regional and the local issues of development and everyday necessities of a better life that have gained electoral traction in the recent state elections in general and the Delhi elections in particular.

Most evident of it all is the AAP's electoral campaign in Delhi which was entirely premised upon what their leader Shri Arvind Kejriwal calls the 'politics of performance' (*'Kaam ki Rajniti'*) that highlighted the work of the Delhi government in the realm of improving education infrastructure, health facilities, free electricity, and better drinking water availability seemed to sway the voters in favour of AAP.¹²

While, the BJP deployed its entire political machinery in terms of its organisation and leadership to further its political agendas of national security, nationalism, dilution of Article 370 in Kashmir, and its much-discussed incessant attacks against the ongoing anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests taking place in Shaheen Bagh in Delhi¹³, seemed to have limited electoral resonance with the people of Delhi. Hence, at least at the regional level, the 'politics of performance' appears to majorly dominate the political discourse over the 'politics of identity'.

¹² Baruah, A. (2021, November 28). *Analysis | Arvind Kejriwal's campaign does the trick for AAP*. The Hindu.

¹³ Anshuman, K. (2020, January 30). Shaheen Bagh dominates BJP rallies as Amit Shah leads attack. *The Economic Times*.

4. Electoral Federalism

The results of the last few Assembly Elections manifest a palpable trend in the voting pattern of the Indian electorate which differs both in terms of their preference for parties as well as the salient issues that seem to strike a chord with the people in the national elections and state elections respectively. The present scenario reinforces the process of federalisation of the Indian political discourse in which, on one hand, the BJP remains the most dominant and powerful political force at the national level. Still, on the other hand, at the provincial level, a slew of regional parties are giving a formidable political challenge to the BJP in the respective state elections and retaining their political clout by raking up the local and regional pressing issues of development.

In the national elections of 2019, BJP bagged all seven parliamentary seats in Delhi with an impressive vote share of around 56%. The 2020 episode is reminiscent of how BJP was routed in the last Delhi Assembly elections in 2015, winning only 3 out of the 69 seats contested despite its impressive win in Delhi during the 2014 national elections. However, it must be noted that the results might not suggest the possibility of an overall dwindling of the BJP, as the party improved its vote share in Delhi in 2020 (38.5%) in comparison to the 2015 elections (32.19%).¹⁴

¹⁴ Ghosh, A. K. (2023, December 4). *Delhi assembly elections: A reinforcement of electoral federalism in India?*. orfonline.org.

Zonal Level Details

Delhi Division is the only administrative and revenue division in Delhi which consists of 11 districts. Each of these districts is headed by a District Magistrate (DM) also called a Deputy Commissioner (DC), who reports to the Divisional Commissioner (Principal Secretary of Revenue). These 11 districts are divided into 33 sub-divisions of Delhi, each headed by a Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM).¹⁵ During the 1970s, Delhi had only four administrative districts i.e. North, South, Central, and New Delhi. Between January 1997 and September 2012, there were nine administrative districts and 27 sub-divisions. In September 2012, two new administrative districts, viz. South-East Delhi and Shahdara were added to the city's map.¹⁶ **Table 1** shows the zonal level details under the Delhi Division.

Districts	Sub-Divisions (Tehsils)	Vidhan Sabha Seats	Major Castes	Remarks
Central Delhi	Civil Lines Karol Bagh Kotwali	7	Brahmin Baniya Chamar Chuhra ¹⁷ Dhanak Khatik	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Muslim population in Central Delhi district is around 33% with 2 Muslim-majority Assembly Constituencies. Schedule Caste (SC) constitutes 24.6% of the total district population. Banias and Sikhs are among the influential communities. A considerable migrant population, mainly Poorvanchalis and Paharis reside here.
East Delhi	Gandhi Nagar Mayur Vihar Preet Vihar	6	Jat Brahmin Chamar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Jats form the largest and most important community. Brahmins form the third

¹⁵ Wikipedia contributors. (2024, June 12). *List of districts of Delhi*. Wikipedia.

¹⁶ Alvi, N. (2012, September 11). 2 new revenue districts on capital's map. *The Times of India*.

¹⁷ Chuhra, also known as Bhangi and Balmiki, belong to the Scheduled castes.

Districts	Sub-Divisions (Tehsils)	Vidhan Sabha Seats	Major Castes	Remarks
			Chuhra Dhobi Khatik Koli Mallah	largest community. 3. OBCs also are an important section of voters. 4. Poorvanchalis have migrated in large numbers; the district has around 32% unauthorised settlements.
New Delhi	Chanakyapuri Delhi Cantonment Vasant Vihar	6	Brahmin Khatri Baniya Chamar Chuhra Dhob Pasi	1. The district comprises 23.4% SC population. 2. Muslim and Christian population constitute over 5% and 4%, respectively.
North Delhi	Alipur Model Town Narela	8	Jat Baniya Brahmin Balai Chamar Chuhra Dhanak Dhobi Koli Mallah	1. SCs and Muslims have a sizeable population of 18.7% and 13.5%, respectively. 2. Jats are an important community. 3. Sikhs have a significant population.
North East Delhi	Karawal Nagar Seelampur Yamuna Vihar	5	Brahmin Baniya Jat Gujjar Chamar Chuhra	1. Muslim population in the district is over 29%.

Districts	Sub-Divisions (Tehsils)	Vidhan Sabha Seats	Major Castes	Remarks
			Dhobi Khatik Koli Mallah	
North West Delhi	Kanjhawala Rohini Saraswati Vihar	7	Jat Brahmin Baniya Balai Chamar Chuhra Dhanak Dhobi Julaha Khatik Koli Pasi	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This district has a significant presence of Dalits voters – SC population is over 19% – North West Delhi seat is reserved for SCs . 2. Jats form a sizeable portion of the electorate, followed by Brahmins, Baniyas, Yadavs and Rajputs. 3. Muslims constitute around 8% of the total population. 4. Sikhs and Jains are important communities.
Shahdara	Seemapuri Shahdara Vivek Vihar	5	-	District was created after the 2011 Census; therefore, no official data is available.
South Delhi	Hauz Khas Mehrauli Saket	5	Jat Gujjar Chuhra Chamar Dhobi Khatik	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jats and Gujjars are the two most important communities 2. Muslims constitute over 16% of the population.
South East Delhi	Defence Colony Kalkaji Sarita Vihar	7	-	District was created after the 2011 Census; therefore, no official data is available.
South West	Dwarka	7	Jat	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jats are an important

Districts	Sub-Divisions (Tehsils)	Vidhan Sabha Seats	Major Castes	Remarks
Delhi	Kapashera Najafgarh		Gujjar Chuhra Chamar Dhobi Julaha	community. 2. Purvanchalis have a significant presence in the district.
West Delhi	Patel Nagar Punjabi Bagh Rajouri Garden	7	Brahmin Jat Balai Chamar Chuhra Dhanak Dhobi Khatik Koli	1. West Delhi has over 10% Sikh population. 2. Muslims constitute over 5% of the district demography. 3. The district comprises 14.8% of SC population. 4. Jats are an important community.

Table 1: Details of Division/Zones in Delhi

Source: Census of India, 2011

Past Electoral Performance

The following table summarises the electoral performance of major parties in Delhi Vidhan Sabha elections since 1993 and Lok Sabha elections since 2009. Seats won by each party have been indicated in brackets next to the vote share (in percentage).

Party/Year	1993	1998	2003	2008	2013	2015	2020
BJP	42.82 (49)	34.02 (15)	35.22 (20)	36.34 (23)	33.07 (31)	32.19 (3)	38.51 (8)
INC	34.48 (14)	47.76 (52)	48.13 (47)	40.31 (43)	24.55 (8)	9.65 (0)	4.26 (0)
AAP	-	-	-	-	29.49 (28)	54.34 (67)	53.57 (62)
BSP	1.88 (0)	3.09 (0)	5.76 (0)	14.05 (2)	5.35 (0)	1.30 (0)	0.71 (0)
SP	0.50 (0)	0.48 (0)	0.65 (0)	0.49 (0)	0.22 (0)	-	-
CPI + CPM	0.59 (0)	0.21 (0)	0.13 (0)	0.13 (0)	0.11 (0)	0.04 (0)	0.03 (0)
IND	5.92 (3)	8.70 (2)	4.86 (1)	3.92 (1)	2.93 (1)	0.53 (0)	0.38 (0)
Others	13.81 (4)	5.74 (1)	5.25 (2)	4.76 (1)	3.65 (2)	1.55 (0)	2.06 (0)

Table 2: Party-wise vote-share and seats won in Vidhan Sabha elections

Source: Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India

Party/Year	2009	2014	2019	2024
BJP	35.23 (0)	46.40 (7)	56.9 (7)	54.7 (7)
INC	57.11 (7)	15.10 (0)	22.6 (0)	19 (0)
AAP	-	32.90 (0)	18.2 (0)	24.3 (0)

BSP	5.34 (0)	1.20 (0)	1.10 (0)	0.7 (0)
SP	0.28 (0)	-	-	-
CPI + CPM	0.12 (0)	0.40 (0)	-	-
IND	1.09 (0)	3.2% (0)	0.40 (0)	0.50 (0)
Others	0.84 (4)	0.23 (0)	0.30 (0)	0.36 (0)

Table 3: Party-wise vote-share and seats won in Lok Sabha elections

Source: Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India

Analysis of the Past Election Results

*1998 Vidhan Sabha Election*¹⁸

The results of the 1998 Vidhan Sabha elections in four states – Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Mizoram – marked a major political defeat for the Bharatiya Janta Party. Never before had a party in power at the Centre been so badly defeated in a major round of state elections within a few months of forming the Union Government. On the other hand, the Congress had a taste of electoral success after a long time as it captured political power in Delhi for the first time after the creation of the Delhi assembly in 1993.

The BJP had registered a thumping victory during the 1993 Delhi Vidhan Sabha election with 49 seats and 42.8 % votes while the Congress had won only 14 seats and secured 34.5% votes. The popularity of the BJP showed an upward trend in the two successive elections held thereafter. During the 1996 Lok Sabha elections, it polled 49.6% votes. In the 1998 Lok Sabha elections, the party led in 52 Vidhan Sabha segments and polled 50.6% votes.

However, the 1998 assembly elections saw the BJP win only 15 seats and poll 33.9% of votes with the Congress securing 47.7% votes and as many as 51 seats. The Third Force only got a notional presence as Shri Shoeb Iqbal won the lone Janata Dal seat from Matia Mahal. The two independents, Shri Matin Ahmed and Shri Ram Singh, both Congress rebels, were successful in the Seelampur and Badarpur constituencies, respectively.

A look at the CSDS exit poll data revealed the growing disenchantment of the people on the issue of price rise. It drove a large section of people away from the ruling party, the BJP. The data confirms that price rise was the biggest issue in this election – it influenced the choice of about 44% voters in Delhi. Escalating onion prices had given the opposition a rallying point against the ruling BJP with campaign jingles like “*Bijli, paani, aloo, pyaaz, sapnon mein aate hain aaj*. (Power, water, potatoes, and onions are available only in our dreams now)”¹⁹ popularised. Shri Sahib Singh Verma, then Chief Minister, whose bluster that “in any case, poor people do not eat onions” prompted the BJP, to hurriedly replace him with Smt. Sushma Swaraj²⁰. The reluctant successor’s promise to make onions available at Rs 5 did little to rebuild public confidence.

¹⁸ 1998 election analysis based on: Kumar, Sanjay. “BJP’s Defeat in Vidhan Sabha Elections, 1998: Widespread Erosion of Support Base.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 5 (1999): 287–92.

¹⁹ Delhi election: How onion prices led to swaraj govt’s defeat in 1998 — the last time BJP held reigns in National Capital. (n.d.).

²⁰ Rekhi, S. (2013, April 9). Is the Government to blame for skyrocketing prices of onions or are the shortages real? *India Today*.

The soaring onion prices proved to be the last straw for many voters while the BJP was facing anti-incumbency and questions about its performance. The CSDS exit poll indicates that nearly 44% people were dissatisfied with the performance of the state government in Delhi and only 21% were satisfied. 9% of all those who voted for the Congress were influenced by the issue of development under the BJP. Issues of the deteriorating law and order situation and general misgovernance during the last few months made the situation even worse for the party in Delhi.

Having emerged as the single-largest party in the Lok Sabha for two consecutive elections (1996 and 1998), the BJP's growth was attributed to its growing popularity among various sections of society. However, surveys of the time indicated that its social base was heavily skewed in favour of a few sections of society. The support for the BJP was high among young voters, the upper caste, the educated, and the upper class. Although some from the deprived sections of society – the Dalits, the tribals, the poor, and the educationally backward - moved towards the BJP during the past few elections, the majority of them still voted for other parties. It was noticed that despite the decline in support for the BJP among the upper caste, highly educated, and high-income groups, it maintained a relatively large support base from these sections compared to the other parties.

The success of the Congress lay in the large support the party received from the poor, deprived and underprivileged sections of society. The Dalits, then constituting 19.6% of Delhi's population, voted in large numbers for the Congress. Even though Congress was the party of the poor, it faced rough weather during the past elections due to the Third Force, which was largely absent in the 1998 VS election. Further, this election was also marked by a shift in the preference of women and young voters as they moved away from the BJP (whom they had supported during the last few elections in large numbers) and backed the Congress.

These elections made clear that performance is the key mantra and rhetoric alone cannot win elections, it has to match with actions. The BJP learned that it could not just bank over Ayodhya and Pokhran while its performance was in shambles.

2003 Vidhan Sabha Election²¹

The Congress won 47 assembly seats and polled 48% votes while the BJP managed to win only 20 seats and polled 35% votes. Other small political parties or independent candidates won the other three assembly seats – Shri Sohaib Iqbal contesting as JD(S) candidate won for the third time from Matia Mahal assembly constituency (a Muslim majority constituency); Shri Ram Vir Singh Bidhuri contesting as Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) candidate won from the Badarpur assembly

²¹ 2003 election analysis based on: Kumar, Sanjay, Dhananjai Joshi, and Abhay Datar. "Assembly Elections in Delhi: Second Innings for Congress." *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 6 (2004): 525–28.

constituency; and the lone independent candidate, Shri Ramvir Singh was elected from Najafgarh assembly constituency. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) though could not manage to open its account but polled 5.8% votes.

The results of the Delhi assembly elections hardly surprised many. All the pre-poll surveys and exit polls had already indicated that the Congress would retain power in Delhi. The major reason attributed to the Congress' victory was having Smt. Sheila Dikshit in command, whose popularity cuts across caste and class lines. If Delhi voted Sheila Dikshit to power for a second time, it had a lot to do with the popular perception that civic life had improved considerably since the beginning of her term in 1998 – air pollution was down by 30% after public transport was ordered to switch to compressed natural gas a year ago; the 8 km metro made commuting a lot less tiresome for citizens; wayward three-wheeler drivers were tamed; and there were fewer power cuts following privatisation. Smt. Sheila Dikshit's regime was perceived to be pro-people, no-nonsense and accessible.²²

What was, further, more advantageous to the ruling Congress was that Shri Madan Lal Khurana was fielded as the CM candidate by the BJP. Not only could the battle-worn veteran simply not connect with young, modern Delhi but was also seen as espousing the interest of the trading classes, a put-off for about three-fourths of the city's voters hailing from Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Bihar, and Haryana. In contrast, Sheila Dikshit, a Punjabi Khatri by birth and the daughter-in-law of the late Uttar Pradesh Brahmin leader Shri Uma Shankar Dikshit, struck a chord with Delhi's migrant population.

Moreover, the quality of the opposition campaign was another booster for the Congress. The BJP relied on a negative campaign and that did not seem to go down well with the voters. Whereas, the Congress campaign was low-key and centred around Smt. Sheila Dikshit's clean image. It was clear that it did not want to take any chances given the fact that it denied tickets to even sitting MLAs with a certain reputation at the risk of losing a seat or two.

One of the other elements that worked well for the Congress was tapping into the popular dividends of the Bhagidari system or people's participation in governance. The electorate's perception of a significant improvement in Delhi's notorious water and electricity supply also seems to have worked in favour of the Congress.

At the peak of his campaign, Shri Madan Lal Khurana railed against the Congress on the 'Tandoor' case and the failure of the Sheila Dixit government to control the spread of dengue. The CSDS post-poll survey clearly shows that issues like the 'Tandoor' case, dengue, establishment of Metro,

²² Iyer, L. (2012, May 22). Only winning Congress chief minister, Sheila Dikshit redefines Delhi politics. *India Today*.

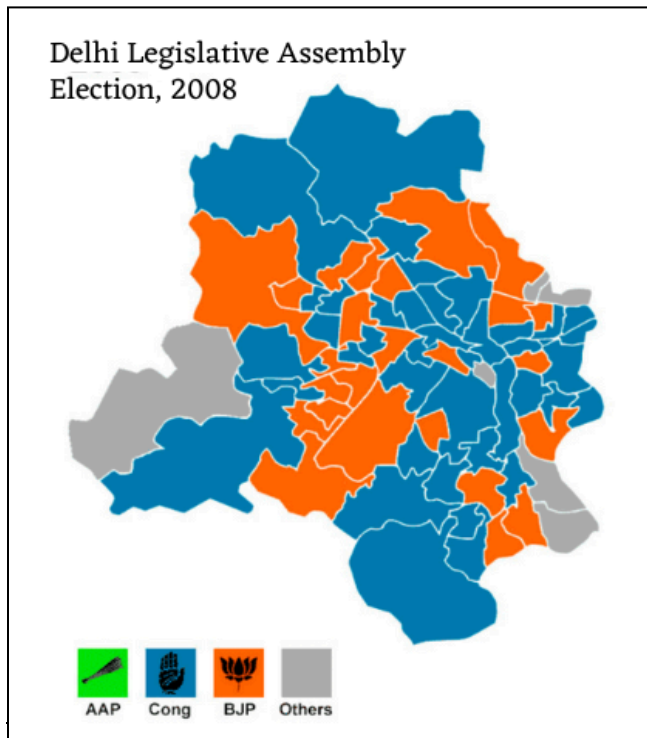
pollution, and cleaning of Yamuna were the concern of only a handful of voters. To most of the voters, developmental issues were important. Unemployment was the most important issue for 17% of the voters. The Congress and the BJP did not even mention the issue of unemployment. It was a failure on the part of the political parties for not focusing on the issues that actually mattered to the voters.

Though the Congress managed to retain power in Delhi it suffered the loss of five assembly seats despite polling a higher percentage of votes. The Congress seemed to have suffered from rebel candidates who contested the elections in some constituencies against the wishes of top party leaders. On the other hand, though the BJP lost the elections the party's tally rose from 15 assembly seats in 1998 to 20 in 2003 along with an increase of about 1.2% compared to the 1998 assembly election. These slim defeat margins for the Congress have been ascribed to late gains registered by the BJP as the election campaign progressed.

In terms of the voter base, both the main parties had managed to retain their traditional supporters in social, educational, and economic spheres as in the 1998 elections. The upper castes, however, were tilted a little more in favour of the Congress. Thus, in the ultimate analysis, one can argue that the Congress' victory was more due to its developmental record than a winning caste-community coalition.

2008 Vidhan Sabha Election²³

Pulling off its third successive win in the Delhi assembly election, the Congress demonstrated that



public dissatisfaction with its Sheila Dikshit-led government was not as overwhelming as supposed. It secured a comfortable majority of 43 seats which was three seats less than in the last election and its lead in terms of popular votes came down to a mere 4 percentage points. Though the BJP managed to increase its tally of seats from 20 to 23, it did not have enough in its armoury to upset the ruling party. The main gainer in the election was the Bahujan Samaj Party, which won two seats and attracted a large chunk of the traditional support base of the Congress and the BJP. The BSP managed to win 2 assembly seats along with a dramatically increased voter share from 5.8% in 2003 to 14%

²³ 2008 election analysis based on: *Delhi Assembly elections: 2008*. (2009, February 7). Economic and Political Weekly.

this time. Independents and candidates from other smaller parties together polled less than 10% of the votes.

BSP was a major factor that worked against both the Congress and the BJP, snatching 28% and 12% votes respectively. Its votes came mainly from constituencies dominated by migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. It even managed to draw some support from Brahmins, Punjabi Khattris, and other upper-caste voters. It garnered additional support from the OBCs and Muslims too. Though there was some shift among Muslim voters towards the BSP, the Congress remained the first choice of Muslim voters in Delhi. Thanks to its strategy of distributing tickets to non-Dalits, the party could tap into the non-Dalit voter base.

Among the Dalits that form 17% of the capital's voters and BSP's biggest voter base, the Jatavs are the largest caste and they voted for the BSP in large numbers. There was hardly any shift in the Jatav support for the BSP in the last five years but the non-Jatav Dalit voters proved to be the game-changer – 22% of the non-Jatav Dalit voters voted for the BSP in 2008, compared to only 8% in the previous assembly elections.

In spite of losing support, the Congress managed to win 43 seats because it registered smaller victories compared to its victories in the previous assembly elections. Its victory, the second time around, was seen as a personal triumph for Chief Minister Smt. Sheila Dikshit, a surprising achievement in an era of “anti-incumbency”. Congress made up for this loss with an overall positive rating of its governance and the image gap between Smt. Sheila Dikshit and Shri Vijay Kumar Malhotra – while 32% preferred Smt. Sheila Dikshit, only 13% preferred Shri V. K. Malhotra as the Chief Minister of Delhi. The choice of Shri V. K. Malhotra as the candidate for the chief minister affected the chances of the BJP.

Furthermore, other parties, mainly the BJP, misjudged what the common people in Delhi felt about the performance of the Dikshit-led government. The findings of the post-poll survey conducted by the CSDS indicated, in varying degrees, that two-thirds of Delhi's voters felt satisfied with the performance of the ruling Congress government while only 30% felt dissatisfied. Even on the Bus Rapid Transport corridor issue²⁴, the government was not negatively evaluated. Moreover, though many did not approve of the policy of sealing domestic property used for commercial purposes, its later reversal helped Congress recover lost ground. The Congress had an edge over the BJP because people rated it better in various aspects of governance, the exceptions being the party's ability to control prices and terrorism. Still, the Mumbai terrorist attack failed to turn people away from Congress in big numbers. With live coverage of the Mumbai attack on television channels, 94% of the people knew about the incident when the election took place, but it affected the voting choices of only 9% of the voters.

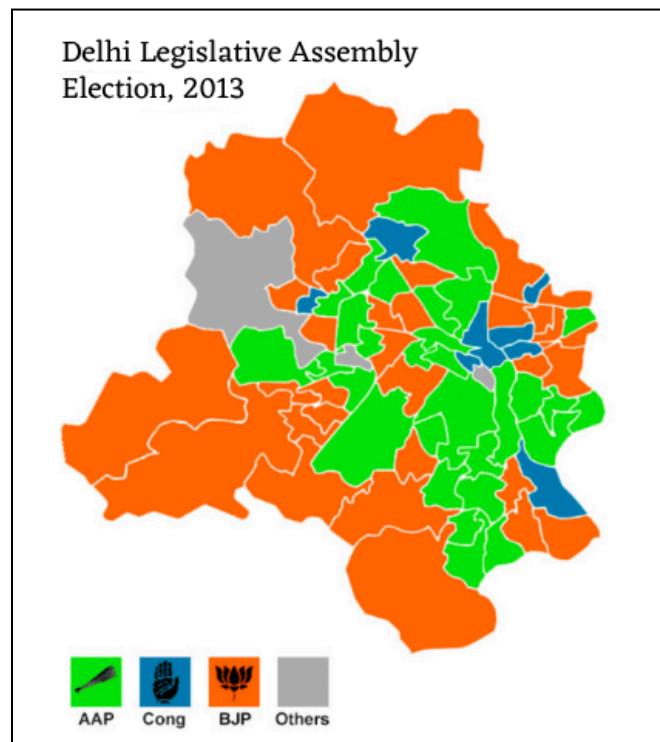
²⁴ Tnn. (2008, February 14). BRT corridor: Red light every half km. *The Times of India*.

Popular opinion underestimated the impact of narrowing class divisions that helped the Congress. The party did suffer losses among the poor, but it maintained an upper hand over other parties even in this group. The Congress managed to make up for the loss of its support in poor constituencies with a reasonably better performance in constituencies where there were sizeable numbers of upper-class voters, traditionally the BJP vote bank.

In conclusion, migration to the city of Delhi had changed the social composition of its voters. Loyalties and voter bases had shifted since the last election. It was a matter of the “survival of the fittest” and the party that adapted to the new social dynamics won.

2013 Vidhan Sabha Election²⁵

The traditionally bipolar contest was replaced with the entry of the Aam Aadmi Party in the electoral



fray. The opinion polls had predicted 6 to 25 seats for AAP, 22 to 36 seats for the BJP, and 19 to 37 seats for INC. Marking a clear anti-incumbency effect, the outcome of the elections was an overwhelming rejection of the incumbent Congress which had been ruling Delhi for the last three terms. It was a humiliating collapse in terms of the seats won (only 8 as compared to 43 in 2008) and vote share (down by 16% to 24.5%). This was a combination of various factors like party state unit in-fighting, a lackluster campaign, and a negative image built around the exposed 2G and Coalgate scams.

Surprisingly, AAP, a debuting party won as many as 28 seats, just four less than the

BJP-SAD alliance’s winning tally of 2 seats. Besides these 68 seats, one seat went to the Janata Dal (United), a former ally of the BJP, and one seat to an independent candidate. Both the parties benefitting directly from the rout of the Congress performed very well but fell short of the majority

²⁵ 2013 election analysis based on: “2013 Legislative Assembly Elections, Delhi.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 49, no. 6 (2014): 82–85; and *The Aam Aadmi Party’s win in Delhi: Dissecting it through Geographical Information Systems*. (2013b, December 19). *Economic and Political Weekly*.

mark (35) resulting in a hung assembly. The BSP performed as disastrously as the Congress winning no seats this election and losing a vote share of nearly 9%.

Despite, an increase in seats, BJP's vote share came down by almost 3% which indicated that the AAP not only ate up the votes of the Congress but also took away a slice of the BJP's vote share, denying it an outright majority. More than half of AAP's votes probably came from voters who would not have voted otherwise (22.64%) or would have voted for non-INC, non-BJP options (31.69%), mainly the BSP. The remaining voters were most likely either "swing voters" (19.80%) who would have otherwise voted either for the INC or BJP depending on various factors or "traditional" INC voters (25.86%). The impact on BJP's "traditional" vote base was minimal, if at all. AAP's presence also ensured that far fewer voters opted for the newly introduced NOTA option (0.63%, lowest among all states that went for polling the same year).

Party	Votes in Scenario without AAP	Votes lost to AAP	% of votes lost to AAP
INC	2,533,677	600,657	23.71%
BJP	2,499,875	0 (104,445 swing votes gained)	0% (18.51% of swing votes gained)
Swing voters (INC or BJP)	564,346	459,901	81.49%
Others	1,750,353	735,995	42.05%

Table 4: Impact of AAP's entry into the electoral fray on votes for BJP & INC

Source: *The Aam Aadmi Party's Win in Delhi: Dissecting It Through Geographical Information Systems, 2013*

This, in a way, according to Chitranshu Mathur, represented a consolidation of opinion among all those who had been hitherto disenchanted with mainstream electoral politics in Delhi. AAP's performance had also established its "winnability", which could, in turn, attract voters who hitherto did not want to "waste" votes on parties they thought would lose.²⁶

²⁶ *The AAP effect.* (2014, March 19). Economic and Political Weekly.

Furthermore, it is clear that in the relatively rural and more far-flung (from the urban agglomeration) areas in west and north-west Delhi predominantly, the AAP's vote share was lower than in the urban concentrations of south, central, east, and even some places in northern Delhi. The ability of the AAP to mount a door-to-door campaign, promising alternative forms of governance driven by innovative ideas such as "constituency-based manifestos" and other measures was responsible for their successes in these urban agglomerations, which invariably have high densities of population.

When analysed in terms of class, it emerges that in the seats inhabited in large numbers by people belonging to the upper class (Shalimar Bagh, Model Town, Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi, Jangpura, Kasturba Nagar, Malaviya Nagar, R K Puram, Greater Kailash, and Kalkaji), the performance of AAP was excellent. The party secured nearly 40% of the vote in these 10 seats and won 7 along with 10 of all middle-class-dominated assembly seats (10 out of 28), both of which formed the traditional voter base of the BJP. 34% of the lower-class-dominated seats (11 out of 32 seats) were bagged by the AAP despite BJP's interestingly best performance in these seats that were traditionally, the Congress strongholds.

Additionally, the constituencies with a high number of slum clusters (jhuggi jhopris) invariably voted for the debutant AAP. Generally considered a middle-class party, the AAP's appeal to them based on extensive media coverage of its anti-corruption agitations seemed to work in the case of the poor. Among the middle class, the professionals saw the need for a non-corrupt force as they have been unable to relate to the "political society" created by the BJP and the Congress at one level, and have been dismayed by the crony capitalism engendered in the policies of the two parties favouring big business

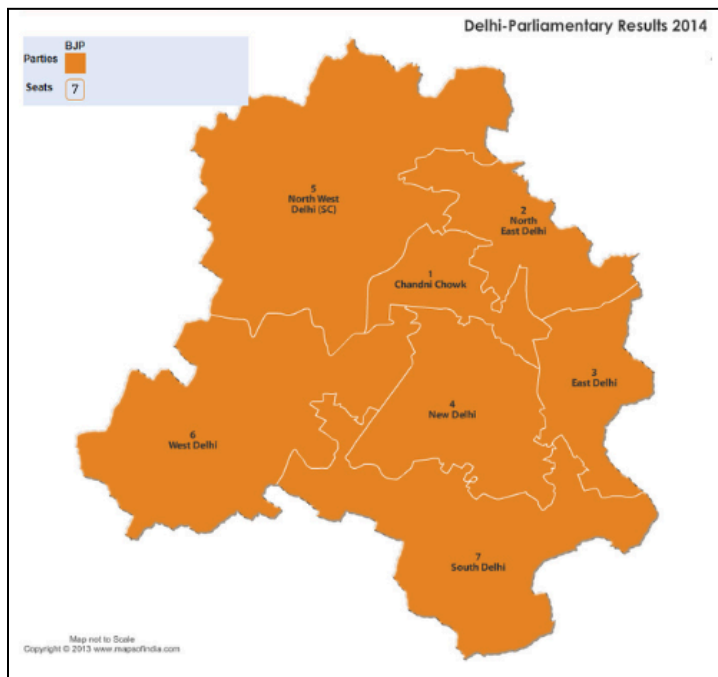
By embarking upon a campaign that sought to equate the lack of adequate services to the jhuggies to that of corruption – perceived by the poor as their everyday effort to effect a bargain for themselves – the party managed to circumvent the traditional patronage networks and reach out to the poor directly. They were impressed with the rhetoric of the AAP to cleanse politics, and by that, they didn't mean an abstract drive against corruption or "decentralised democracy", but the ability to do away with the culture of greasing palms and paying obeisance to local patriarchs. This reason for support goes beyond considerations of the low cost of services, which the AAP promised the poor once they came to power and which is quoted as the main reason why the poor opted to vote for the AAP.

Adopting a canny symbolism – the choice for the name of the party ("the party of the common man", its symbol, "the broom" and fielding candidates based on a mix of a reputation as social activists or those who have a local presence – the AAP managed to swiftly overcome its newcomer disadvantages. And it managed to do so without taking recourse to particularism – "identity politics" based on caste, religion, or "kulak" identities – but a discourse that appealed to a multi-class base.

The seats reserved for SCs exhibited their confidence in AAP (winning three-fourths seats) leaving behind the BSP whose vote share fell by more than half (19% to 8%). Finally, the major reason that prevented the AAP from gaining a majority was its failure to convince the Muslims to vote for it. The minority population has voted for the Congress seeking to support it as a bulwark against the rise of the BJP.

2014 Lok Sabha Election

The BJP, having recorded a landslide victory, turned the tables as it defeated AAP which made a



spectacular debut in the Assembly polls just five months back. The BJP secured all seven seats with huge margins rendering both AAP and the Congress without a single constituency.²⁷ The Congress came consistently third behind AAP with nearly one-fourth of its vote share from the 2009 polls. AAP, on the other hand, improved its vote share by 4 percentage points. The BSP performed the worst and became almost a non-entity in the state.

The success of the BJP and AAP's improved performance can be attributed mainly to the further decline and

realignment of castes and classes in support of the Congress. Two major processes defined the city's landscape at that time – the first was the movement of the upper castes and the OBCs from the Congress and AAP back toward the BJP, and the other was the simultaneous movement of the Muslims and the Dalits from the Congress to AAP.²⁸ Among the Dalits, the support for BSP declined five times as compared to Congress' three times since the 2009 elections. On the Muslim front, Congress faced the most severe setback with AAP sweeping every three out of five Muslim votes. They saw the AAP as a better bet against the BJP seeing their win in 2013.

Disillusioned with the Congress, the upper classes shifted to the BJP instead of the AAP. The election pattern had reversed as AAP secured more upper and middle-class votes than lower-class in the Vidhan Sabha elections. Kejriwal's activism and later resignation distanced the upper and middle-class voters

²⁷ *Elections 2014: BJP sweeps Delhi, wins all 7 seats.* (2014, May 16). The Economic Times.

²⁸ Lokniti. (n.d.-b). https://www.lokniti.org/media/upload_files/PU-%20Delhi.pdf

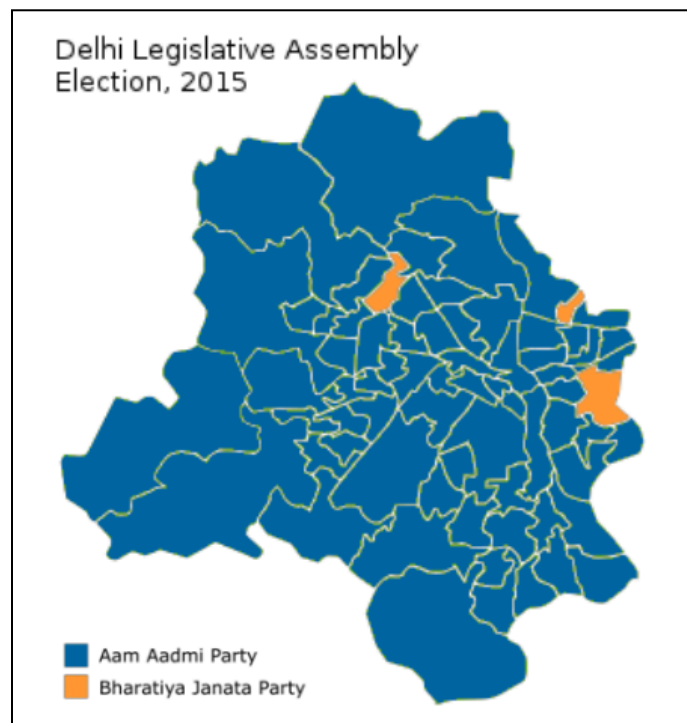
from his party. According to the NES 2014 Pre-poll survey, only 14.1% of people thought that he was genuinely concerned while 21.8 % agreed that he was ‘only doing drama’.²⁹

The Modi factor, no doubt, played a major role. However, the resignation became an opportunity for the opponents to label Shri Arvind Kejriwal as a deserter who is more hungry for power at the Centre than fulfilling his promises to Delhi’s people. The people’s choice of PM changed over two months with support for Shri Arvind Kejriwal descending from 34% in January to 20% in March and that for Modi, further increasing.

Another cause for AAP’s defeat was its double-facedness in attacking both the BJP and Congress. UPA’s performance had triggered an anti-Congress settlement which the AAP couldn’t capitalise on. Instead, it strongly criticised the BJP months before the polls disappointing its supporters of the anti-Congress plank.

2015 Vidhan Sabha Election³⁰

AAP lost some ground post the resignation of its leader, Shri Arvind Kejriwal from the post of Chief Minister after only 49 days of forming the government. Despite the BJP promising a more “stable government”, promoting Modi-centric campaigns, and reaching out to the urban aspirational



population by promoting the “Gujarat Model”, the AAP registered a historical victory, sweeping 67 out of the 70 assembly seats.

AAP’s vote share in 2015 had increased by about 25% and its absolute votes by 25,56,797. This expansion was attributed mainly to the additional voting by new voters; and the mass exodus of voters from the Congress, BSP, and other small and regional parties/independents (whose total votes declined by 24.5 lakhs). The case was not the same for the BJP despite its massive loss of seats because its absolute votes had increased by nearly 3 lakhs.

²⁹ Lokniti. (n.d.). <https://www.lokniti.org/national-election-studies>

³⁰ 2015 election analysis based on: Bauer, V., & Dubey, S. K. (2015). *2015 Delhi Assembly elections verdict: An analysis*.

The major reasons for the two-year-old party included – the charisma of the CM candidate: Shri Arvind Kejriwal struck a chord with the average Delhi voter as the best chief ministerial candidate for the city-state much in the manner that Shri Narendra Modi had in the General Elections.³¹ Smt. Kiran Bedi, the BJP's CM face lacked the political personality and communication skills owing to her background as a policewoman. Not only was there a wave of revulsion amongst the State leaders; the ordinary BJP worker also did not identify with the former Indian Police Service officer. For the BJP, the 2015 Delhi elections were perhaps the most internally sabotaged in recent memory. While the AAP had finalised most of the candidates in the first week of December 2014, and was able to hit the ground running, many of the BJP candidates were announced on the last day of nominations, leaving little room for campaigning.

The AAP outsmarted the BJP in campaign strategy offering a positive agenda for governance in contrast to BJP's negative one; and the local touch that the AAP held onto by getting its volunteers to reach every nook and corner of the city while the BJP largely banked on Modi's brand of development. Interestingly, despite remaining 16 years out of power, the BJP still enjoyed the confidence of a large chunk of the electorate yet not enough to enable it to establish a government.

The Congress, on the other hand, had relied on consolidating its traditional vote base of Dalits, Muslims, and the urban poor which was a failed tactic as they all shifted to the AAP en masse. The BSP has seen its downfall in the state since the 2008 Assembly election and has not been able to consolidate its vote shares among the Bahujans in the State that formed its voter base.

The social coalition in Delhi, predominantly made up of the urban poor, lower class/castes, lower middle class, minorities, and migrants, seemed to favour the AAP. The migrants including the Purvachalis and Punjabis votes overwhelmingly for the AAP. The minority votes of the Muslims (who shifted from the Congress since the last elections) and Christians and Sikhs were also directed to the new party. The trader community (Baniyas), lawyers, and auto-rickshaw drivers also voted for the AAP in large numbers. The young voters were largely enchanted by the party taking up modern issues that mattered and projecting young faces into leadership positions.

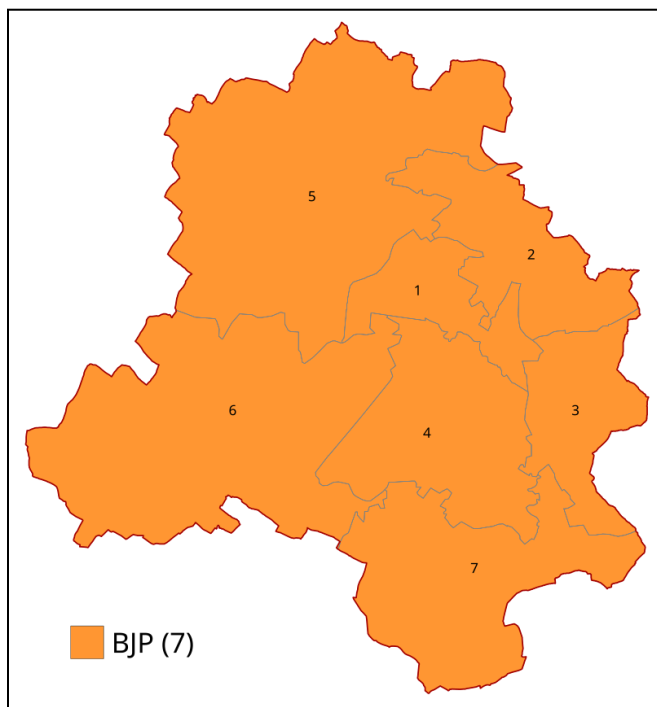
A Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) post-poll survey showed that the AAP got 65% of the vote of the urban poor versus just 23% went to the BJP.³² This 42% difference was at the core of the magnitude of the triumph. The AAP got a cross-class, cross-caste vote, but at the heart of it was a "class divide": as you went down the income chain, the gap between the AAP and the BJP widened – just a 2% difference in voting preferences among the rich.

³¹ Sardesai, R. (2015, February 11). Delhi results: How AAP emerged as the "baap" of all parties. *Dailyo*.

³² Lokniti. (n.d.-a). <https://www.lokniti.org/>

2019 Lok Sabha Election

Silencing the comments that the grand old party was wiped out in Delhi, the Congress finished second,



leaving AAP behind in five out of seven seats in the triangular contest. But, the BJP march was such that they were out-voted by at least 2,00,000 votes in each of these seats. In the vote share too, the BJP got 56%, more than the combined vote share of AAP (18%), and Congress (22%).³³ Both AAP and Congress had flirted with each other ahead of the election to seal an alliance but couldn't reach a definite agreement and ultimately fought separately.³⁴

Riding high on the Modi way, the BJP had a clean sweep with all its candidates securing more than 50% of votes. However, the CSDS-Lokniti post-poll data seems to indicate

that while leadership was a factor, it was not the most critical issue that swayed electoral preferences. The presence of the party on the ground was a key factor driving support for it.³⁵ The BJP focused on its performance over the last five years, including its welfare schemes. Moreover, the Balakot air strike gave the BJP momentum and turned the narrative away from economic issues to national security. A disunited opposition and the inability of the Congress to present a counter-narrative, too, helped the BJP.

AAP's desire for an alliance with Congress was paradoxical given that it came into existence after a high-profile fight against Congress on corruption. What prompted the two parties to think of seat sharing was the common motive of defeating the BJP. This held in the case of the 2014 vote share, however, it backfired as people got further confused about AAP's motives.

Being in the National Capital Territory, AAP gets an undue share of publicity in the media which it could have used in its favour. Instead, it engaged in negative politics which turned out to be one of the

³³ *Congress takes heart with 2nd place in Delhi but Road to Assembly Tough*. Hindustan Times. (2019, May 24).

³⁴ Staff, S. (2019b, February 25). *AAP preparing to contest Delhi elections alone as Congress Refused Alliance, says Arvind Kejriwal*. Scroll.in.

³⁵ Shastri, S. (2021, December 3). *Leadership sweepstakes and the Modi factor*.

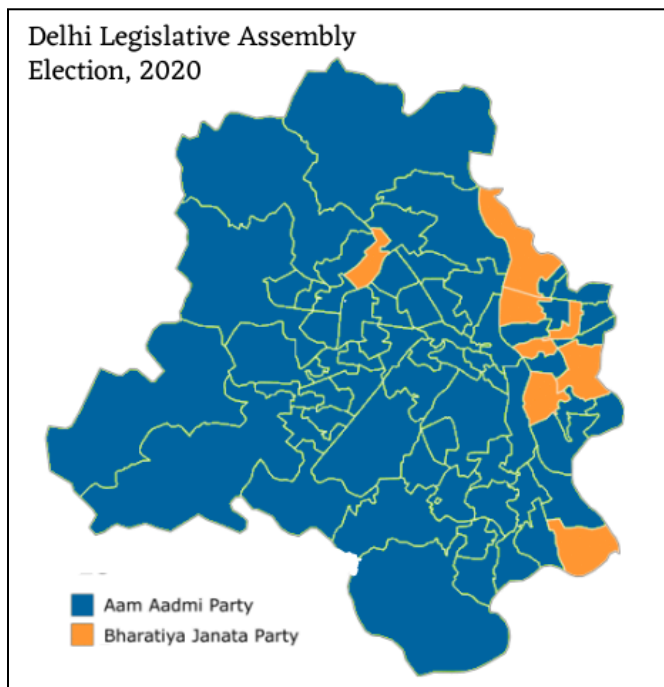
reasons for AAP's massive defeat. Whether it was badmouthing the Prime Minister, or leveling baseless allegations against the BJP for horse-trading³⁶ and defaming its candidate, Gautam Gambhir³⁷.

Moreover, claims made by AAP in education and health fields did not hold water on the ground. Arvind Kejriwal's government failed to fulfil the promises it made before the 2015 Assembly election. It did not even implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme, a central government initiative.

This drove even the Muslims back to Congress. In most of the minority-dominated Assembly segments of three Lok Sabha constituencies, vis. East Delhi, Chandni Chowk, and North East Delhi, the Congress gave a tough fight if not secure more votes than its rivals. It managed to regain the votes of the lower class with its promise of a minimum annual income of Rs 72,000 to poor families if elected to power.³⁸ Meanwhile, the BJP retained the loyalty of the upper and middle-income groups that were appealed by the nationalist and improved the law and order narrative of the BJP.

2020 Vidhan Sabha Election³⁹

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal were voted back to power with a



resounding majority in the Delhi Assembly election. The AAP, accompanied by an unambiguous pro-incumbency sentiment, won 62 seats in the 70-member assembly though five seats less than last time. The BJP came a distant second with eight seats while the Congress drew a blank, making the contest essentially a bipolar one.

AAP's victory was a remarkable one, polling almost 54% of the popular vote, similar to what it did in 2015. Contrastingly, the AAP could not secure a single vote in the 2019 general elections with only 18% votes. Whereas, the BJP registered a 56% vote share

³⁶ Press Trust of India & Business Standard. (2019, May 1). BJP attempting to “buy” seven AAP MLAs at Rs 10 crore each: Sisodia.

³⁷ India Today. (2019, October 22). Delhi court dismisses Atishi Marlena's complaint against Gautam Gambhir. *India Today*.

³⁸ Mathur, A. K. N. M. (2019, May 12). Delhi's 7 show why it is such a difficult election to call this time. *The Times of India*.

³⁹ 2020 election analysis based on: Barthwal, A., & Ali, A. (2021). Bypassing the Patronage Trap: Evidence from Delhi Assembly Election 2020. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 9(2), 254–272.

in 2019 which fell steeply by 18% in just a year. Much can be owed to their differing campaign styles and choice of electoral issues taken up by both the parties – while the AAP ran a positive campaign, highlighting its performance in improving the quality of government schools and health clinics, providing subsidised water and electricity, installation of wifi, and ensuring free public transport for women, the BJP preferred to campaign on more national and emotive issues like the CAA and Kashmir. The AAP, cleverly, did not challenge the BJP's ideological narrative but chose to steer clear of it.

A Lokniti-CSDS survey conducted before the election found that a clear majority of respondents chose development and governance as their priority while only 7% said that ideological issues mattered for the election.⁴⁰ The AAP had the upper hand in the state in terms of the campaign as its performance in the past five years was vocal about its competence. The party proved its credentials by fulfilling some of its solemn promises with noteworthy efforts taken in the health and education sectors, as suggested by the ground reports.⁴¹ The government schooling system, which had seen some degree of downsliding, was given a new lease of life during their tenure. Similarly, the mohalla clinic experiment of this party became a new model for healthcare reform replicated in other states and appealed to the middle class.

The fact that voters were not very satisfied with the municipal governments controlled by the BJP gave the AAP an additional edge. Above all, the AAP benefitted because it had Kejriwal's face at the head of its campaign. The BJP, on the other hand, had no such credible, visible, or declared face. The party once again depended on the charisma and charm of its national leaders, mainly Modi.⁴²

The key to the Delhi elections was the Purvanchali population, the migrants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh that grew in sizeable numbers over the last 25 years. They were ignored by both the Congress and the BJP. AAP tapped this opportunity and gave them sizeable representation.

In Lok Sabha 2019, the AAP came third and was beaten not only by the BJP but also the Congress. Therefore, it was rather shocking to see that the INC vote share being reduced to only 4.26 % and 63 of their contestants did not even recover their deposit. The minority vote swung to AAP as did other sections once loyal to the Congress including the migrants and the poor. The outcome starkly brought out a severe organisational crisis, a disconnect with the grassroots, and the absence of credible

⁴⁰ LOKNITI, CSDS Delhi. (n.d.). Delhi Prepoll Survey 2020-Findings. In *Delhi Prepoll Survey 2020-Findings* (pp. 1–6).

⁴¹ Prasad, M., & Prasad, M. (2022, May 16). *The Citizen - Independent Journalism | Indian News | The Citizen*. The Citizen - Independent Journalism | Indian News | the Citizen.

⁴² Palshikar, S. (2020, February 13). *Delhi Assembly elections 2020: How the capital voted - and why*. The Indian Express.

leadership at the state as well as the national level. Despite the face-losing loss, the Congress leaders seem to be rejoiced by the results, mainly because the BJP lost.

Constituency-wise Analysis

Delhi sends 7 MPs to the Lok Sabha, the Lower House of the Indian Parliament. Each of the 7 Parliamentary Constituencies (PC) comprises 10 Assembly Constituencies (AC). One of the PCs, North West Delhi is reserved for the Scheduled Castes Category.

Table 5: List of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies

Sr. No.	Parliamentary Constituency	Assembly Constituency
1.	Chandni Chowk	Adarsh Nagar, Shalimar Bagh, Shakur Basti, Tri Nagar, Wazirpur, Model Town, Sadar Bazar, Chandni Chowk, Matia Mahal, Ballimaran
2.	North East Delhi	Burari, Timarpur, Seemapuri, Rohtas Nagar, Seelampur, Ghonda, Babarpur, Gokalpur, Mustafabad, Karawal Nagar
3.	East Delhi	Jangpura, Okhla, Trilokpuri, Kondli, Patparganj, Laxmi Nagar, Vishwas Nagar, Krishna Nagar, Gandhi Nagar, Shahdara
4.	New Delhi	Karol Bagh, Patel Nagar, Moti Nagar, Delhi Cantt, Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi, Kasturba Nagar, Malviya Nagar, R K Puram, Greater Kailash
5.	North West Delhi (SC)	Nerela, Badli, Rithala, Bawana, Mundka, Kirari, Sultan Pur Majra, Nangloi Jat, Mangol Puri, Rohini
6.	West Delhi	Madipur, Rajouri Garden, Hari Nagar, Tilak Nagar, Janakpuri, Vikaspuri, Uttam Nagar, Dwarka, Matiala, Najafgarh
7.	South Delhi	Bijwasan, Palam, Mehrauli, Chhatarpur, Deoli, Ambedkar Nagar, Sangam Vihar, Kalkaji, Tughlakabad, Badarpur

Chandni Chowk

Party/Year	2009	2014	2019
BJP	34.00%	44.60%	52.90%
INC	59.70%	17.90%	29.70%
AAP	-	30.70%	14.70%

Table 6: Party-wise vote share in Chandni Chowk PC
Source: Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India

Many believe winning this seat is like opening a door to power. Looking at the history of Chandni Chowk, people who have won this Lok Sabha seat in the last 20 years, have also become a part of the government at the Centre. This seat has witnessed a bipolar contest between the BJP and the INC till 2009. After the AAP came to the electoral picture of the UT, the contest turned out to be a tripolar one.

It is a Hindu-majority constituency comprising 75% of the population. A considerable number of Muslims are a part of this PC – 16.7%. They formed around 20.34% before the delimitation. Sikhs make up 2.26%, Jains 2%, and SCs 21.14%. Dominated by Baniyas, Vaishyas, and Sikhs post delimitation, this seat has become a stronghold of the BJP which is said to be a well-wisher of the business community.

Incumbent Dr. Shri Harsh Vardhan (General-Baniya), from BJP, has won this seat in the past two elections. In 2014, he beat the former MP Shri Kapil Sibal (General-Kshatriya) of INC (now, independent). He defeated the INC candidate Shri PK Gupta (General-Baniya) by a margin of 2,28,145 votes in 2019.⁴³ The BJP has led both the Lok Sabha elections in the PC with a huge margin except for the Matia Mahal Assembly constituency dominated by Muslims.

The delimitation completed in 2007 resulted in a decline in the influence of the Muslim community on the electoral outcome which seemed to make it difficult for Congress.⁴⁴ The history says otherwise as INC scripted a win. This, however, didn't hold in the following elections as the Modi wave emerged and grew stronger. Moreover, the former has not had a well-known face after Shri Kapil Sibal. In the Assembly elections too, the AAP beat Congress as the Muslim vote among others deflected toward it.

⁴³ Tantra, N. (2024, March 20). *Chandni Chowk Lok Sabha Seat Analysis*. Niti Tantra.

⁴⁴ Tewari, R. (2009, May 7). Congress may find the going tough. *Mint*.

North East Delhi

Party/Year	2009	2014	2019
BJP	33.70%	45.20%	54.00%
INC	59.00%	16.30%	29.00%
AAP	-	34.40%	13.10%

Table 7: Party-wise vote share in North East Delhi PC

Source: Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India

The constituency of North East Delhi came into existence in 2008 as a part of the implementation of the recommendations of the Delimitation Commission of India constituted in 2002. The area, referred to as 'Jamna Paar' – the other side of Yamuna – by the localities, faces water quality issues and inadequate infrastructure including poor road conditions. Since it is inhabited by a large number of Migrants, the long-standing concern regarding the regularisation of unauthorised colonies is an electoral hot topic.

This PC has the highest concentration of Muslim voters at 19.2%, closely followed by Scheduled Caste voters at 18.6% who are INC supporters traditionally. Conversely, Brahmins, Vaishyas, Rajputs, and Yadavs comprising 8.7%, 7.8%, 2% and 2%, of the electorate respectively, tend to vote for the BJP. Jats and Gujjars, constituting 3% and 4% respectively, generally divide their support between the BJP and Congress, usually preferring the former. Additionally, the electorate includes upper caste Purvanchalis (9%) – migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and Paharis (4%) – residents from the hilly regions of Uttarakhand, who play significant roles in elections. These predominantly Hindu communities tend to support the BJP.

Shri Jai Prakash Agarwal (General-Baniya) from Indian National Congress was elected in 2009 as MP from this constituency. The next two elections have seen the victory of Shri Manoj Tiwari (General-Brahmin). He was fielded keeping in mind the Poorvanchali voters given that he belongs to the same ethnicity and is a famous movie star in Bhojpuri films. Shri Manoj Tiwari was even able to beat Sheila Dikshit (INC), the three-time chief minister of Delhi, and AAP's Shri Dilip Pandey (General-Brahmin). Despite all three candidates hailing from Uttar Pradesh, BJP succeeded by a huge margin. This can be majorly attributed to the popularity of Shri Narendra Modi.

Besides, the Muslim voters who form the largest share of the vote bank in the assembly constituencies of Babarpur and Mustafabad were bifurcated between the AAP and Congress as a large number of

them shifted to AAP in its debut in 2014. A deflection back to Congress in 2019 was the primary reason for its increased vote share, leaving AAP behind.

East Delhi

Party/Year	2009	2014	2019
BJP	32.30%	49.83%	55.35%
INC	60.41%	16.99%	24.44%
AAP	-	32.00%	17.00%

Table 8: Party-wise vote share in East Delhi PC

Source: Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India

This Lok Sabha seat is an urban constituency, one of the largest and highly populated in the country. Erstwhile-Brahmin dominated, this PC has a larger number of SC, OBC, and Muslim voters after the delimitation. An influx of Purvanchalis in the area has pushed the Brahmin community to the third place. Since its formation, BJP has been the most successful political party in East Delhi winning 7 elections. The seat has seen candidates of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh and the Janata Party too, win the election once each.

The largest community of the PC is the Jats comprising 20% of the total electorate. Generally, the Jat votes get split between the BJP and Congress. Still, there has been a greater inclination towards the latter as observed during the Haryana Assembly Elections of 2019⁴⁵ as well as the Farmers' protest. The second largest community of Muslims comprising 18.9% voters has historically voted against the BJP. Their loyalty is with the grand old party but is now shared by the AAP too. East Delhi has 15.4% of SC and 11.8% of OBC, both now support the BJP. Similarly, the Baniya, Vaishya, and Multani Jat (business community) rally behind the saffron party.

The sprawling constituency has been a keenly contested battleground oscillating between the BJP and Congress. In 2014, the BJP candidate, Shri Mahiesh Giri (General-Brahmin) won with the AAP candidate, Shri Rajmohan Gandhi (General-Baniya) and incumbent MP Shri Sandeep Dixit (General-Brahmin) from Congress trailing behind respectively. The leadership of Shri Narendra Modi along with the nationalist and Hindutva narrative was the key besides the caste equations.

In the 2019 polls, all three candidates belonged to the Punjabi community to woo 8% Punjabi voters of the PC – BJP's Shri Gautam Gambhir (General-Punjabi Khatri), INC's Shri Arvinder Singh Lovely (General-Punjabi Sikh), and AAP's Smt. Atishi Marlana Singh (General-Punjabi Rajput). The division

⁴⁵ Singh, S. (2019, October 26). 25 Jats elected to Haryana assembly; Congress has biggest pie with nine. *The Times of India*.

of Muslim votes, especially in the Okhla and Gandhi Nagar constituencies between the AAP and Congress proved beneficial to Gambhir, the cricketer-turned-politician, not to mention his popularity.

One of the highest populated constituencies, East Delhi has around 32% unauthorised settlements making it a major poll issue. Besides sanitation and law and order, pollution is something the people of East Delhi take very seriously, especially in Anand Vihar, Shahdara, and their surrounding areas that face high pollution levels due to the Ghazipur Landfill site.

New Delhi

Party/Year	2009	2014	2019
BJP	39.00%	46.80%	55.10%
INC	59.60%	18.90%	27.10%
AAP	-	30.00%	16.50%

Table 9: Party-wise vote share in New Delhi PC

Source: Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India

New Delhi PC is the oldest constituency in Delhi to exist currently. This seat has sent some eminent personalities to the Lower House including Smt. Sucheta Kripalani, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Shri Lal Krishna Advani and Shri Rajesh Khanna among others.

Around 6.1% of the voters are Muslims followed by Sikh (3.08%). With 21.14% of Sceduled Caste voters, this PC has two Assembly Constituencies reserved for the SCs – Karol Bagh and Patel Nagar.

Many of the voters belong to middle income and affluent communities in the PC. This PC has some of the city’s busiest and famous markets such as Connaught Place, Sarojini Nagar, Defence Colony, Khan Market, South Extension, Green Park and Hauz Khas, which means there is no dearth of traders. Home to the Parliament Building and Rashtrapati Bhavan, the voters from this constituency include top politicians, bureaucrats and other government employees (17%). Largely urban, the segment has a number of urbanised villages and slum clusters which battle lack of sanitation and cleanliness and occasional water shortage.

In 2014, BJP fielded Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi (General-Punjabi Khatri), a Supreme Court Lawyer by profession. Congress’ incumbent MP Shri Ayaj Maken (OBC-Jat) was contesting for the third term, hoping for a hat-trick. Another debutant, Shri Ashish Khetan (General-Brahmin) was fielded by AAP. The founder of a news website involved in a sting operation against Gujarat Police, Khetan banked on his credentials as an honest journalist. AAP was confident in its debut attempt at the Lok Sabha

elections given its exemplary performance in the 2013 Assembly Elections. However, according to the surveys on ground most people favoured Shri Narendra Modi as the PM face despite voting for the AAP in Assembly Elections. Moreover, the resignation by the Arvind Kejriwal-led government after the short 49-day stint had reduced AAP's chances in General Elections.⁴⁶ The BJP, high on the Modi-wave, won the seat. AAP, similar to other seats, secured more votes than the Congress given the strong anti-incumbency against them.

BJP and INC's candidates for 2019 election were the same while AAP fielded Shri Brijesh Goyal (General-Baniya). Despite being a General Election, local issues were at the forefront of the campaigning by all political parties. The sealing drive affecting the traders⁴⁷ and the felling of 14,000 trees to build government colonies⁴⁸ topped the list. While Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi and Shri Ajay Maken focused on their contributions as MPs, Shri Brijesh Goyal pledged for the complete statehood of Delhi alongside wooing the Baniya community. AAP's advantage was Shri Arvind Kejriwal among 9 other MLAs from the constituencies in New Delhi. Usually a seat of close contest with winning margin as low as 1500 votes, Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi stole the show with a resounding victory margin of 2.5 lakh votes. AAP was pushed to the third position in a contest seen largely between PM Modi and Shri Rahul Gandhi.

North West Delhi⁴⁹

Party/Year	2009	2014	2019
BJP	35.30%	46.70%	60.90%
INC	56.80%	11.70%	17.00%
AAP	-	38.90%	21.20%

Table 10: VParty-wise vote share in North West Delhi PC

Source: Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India

The largest Constituency of Delhi NCT, this PC came into existence in 2008 after the latest delimitation exercise. The seat is reserved for the Scheduled Castes Category. The seat is largely dominated by the Dalit voters – the SCs form 23% of the total electorate. Being close to Haryana, the area sees a significant influence on the Jat voters (16%). The Vaishyas constitute 10%, Brahmins 12%,

⁴⁶ Mishra, A. R. (n.d.). Political equations, allegiances change ahead of voting in Delhi. *Mint*.

⁴⁷ Staff, S. (2018, March 21). Delhi: Supreme Court-appointed panel refuses to commit to ending sealing drive. *Scroll.in*.

⁴⁸ Correspondent, H. (2018, June 24). Delhi participates in 'Chipko' movement to save 14,000 trees from felling. *Hindustan Times*.

⁴⁹ North West Delhi election analysis based on: Correspondent, H. (2019, May 7). Lok Sabha 2019 constituency: North West Delhi has gone to Congress as well as BJP. *Hindustan Times*.

Muslims 10%, Yadavs 3.5% and Rajputs 1.5% of the total voters. North West Delhi has a considerable Purvanchali and Punjabi/Sikh population (12% and 6.5% of the population respectively).⁵⁰

In 2009, Smt. Krishna Tirath (SC-Jatav) won the bipolar contest against BJP's Smt. Meera Kanwaria (SC-Raigar). Post delimitation, the North West Delhi seat has been polarised by Jatavs and Balmikis who have usually supported the INC. In 2014, BJP fielded its prominent Dalit face, Shri Udit Raj (converted to Buddhism) who secured the highest vote share. Smt. Rakhi Bidlan (SC-Balmiki) came second while incumbent MP Smt. Krishna Tirath from INC finished third. Naturally, the Modi wave instrumental. The vote share of the Congress declined as they shifted to the AAP.

Shri Hans Raj Hans (SC-Balmiki) of BJP defeated Shri Gugan Singh Ranga (SC-Balmiki) of AAP, and Shri Rajesh Liloithia of Congress. This time AAP secured the least vote share as its candidate lost by six lakh votes. The BJP had the support of the Purvanchali, Brahmin, and Baniya voters. INC bagged the Muslim votes this time and the Jat and Dalit votes were split between all the three parties.

West Delhi

Party/Year	2009	2014	2019
BJP	39.70%	48.50%	60.40%
INC	54.30%	14.40%	20.10%
AAP	-	28.60%	17.60%

Table 11: Party-wise vote share in West Delhi PC

Source: Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India

This constituency came into existence in 2008 as a part of the implementation of the recommendations of the Delimitation Commission of India constituted in 2002. West Delhi is a socially, geographically, and demographically diverse constituency, with its share of unauthorised colonies, planned colonies, agrarian belts, and other areas. The West Delhi population comprises 14.8% SCs, 10.69% Sikhs, and 5.89% Muslims. Apart from these, the huge share of Jats and Purvanchali voters play a major role in determining the voting outcomes.

The constituency is densely populated and several parts of it lack basic civic infrastructure. The concerns of the residents include irregular water supply, traffic congestion, and pollution. West Delhi seat was held by the popular Purvanchali face, Shri Mahabal Mishra (General-Brahmin) of INC for the 2009 term. BJP's Shri Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma (OBC-Jat) won the 2014 elections. He surpassed

⁵⁰ Tantra, N. (2024b, March 27). *Delhi North West LOK Sabha Constituency Analysis*. Niti Tantra.

AAP's Shri Jarnail Singh (Jat Sikh) and the sitting MP Shri Mahabal Mishra of INC with a sizeable margin of more than two lakh votes. Jarnail Singh had a clear advantage over Congress' Mishra owing to his religious identity as well as the growing confidence in AAP as a party. Parvesh Verma was successful in attracting the large Jat population though with the help of his father, Shri Sahib Singh Verma's goodwill and Modi's leadership.

Despite all the parties claiming to contest elections on development rather than on caste, they chose Jat and Purvanchali leaders to woo their respective vote banks. In 2019, Parvesh Verma secured a comfortable victory with one of the highest margins in Delhi elections. AAP's Shri Balbir Singh Jakhar (Jat Sikh) was left behind by the Congress this time but by a few thousand votes. Shri Mahabal Mishra could manage to secure a vote share of around 20%. It can be attributed to Mishra's absence from the Congress' Purvanchali outreach as their high command relied solely on Sheila Dikshit's Uttar Pradesh connect even though she has an inconsistent track record in Delhi, especially in attracting Purvanchali voters.⁵¹ Congress failed to project Mahabal Mishra as the party's front-line campaigner to build a statewide campaign around the issue of authorisation of migrant colonies given his exemplary role in public service.⁵²

South Delhi

Party/Year	2009	2014	2019
BJP	36.50%	45.20 %	56.80%
INC	49.30%	11.40%	13.60%
AAP	-	35.50%	26.50%

Table 12: Party-wise vote share in South Delhi PC

Source: Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India

The seat was a stronghold of the Bharatiya Janata Party for many years but in 2009, after delimitation, INC won this seat. The South Delhi area had a large number of upscale and posh localities before the delimitation which strengthened the upper and middle class vote bank of the BJP. Post the delimitation exercise, villages, slums, and resettlement colonies dominated the landscape of the parliamentary seat that was secured by Congress, largely supported by the lower-income groups⁵³. The

⁵¹ Rebbapragada, P. (2019, April 25). By keeping Mahabal Mishra out of campaigns, Congress missed chance to counter AAP, BJP's Purvanchali outreach in Delhi. *Firstpost*.

⁵² Mahabal isn't just a face for Purvanchalis. Having worked in the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) for 12 years, he was instrumental in getting the Master Plan 2020 approved and moved no less than 80 amendments to make it more relevant.

⁵³ *Lok Sabha polls 2014: Caste, community equations may influence outcome in S Delhi*. The Economic Times. (n.d.).

constituency faces problems like a lack of infrastructure development while water and sewerage issues dominate the non-regularised colonies.

This PC has 54 villages out of which 22 villages belong to the Gujjar Community, and 17 villages belong to the Jat Community. Gujjars are the largest community (10%) and command a significant influence in this seat. Muslims make up 9% of the total electorate, 2.4% Sikhs, and 15.4% belong to the SC category.⁵⁴ Purvanchali voters are estimated to be around 15% thus, having a major influence on the polling trends. When it comes to the Purvanchali voter base, unlike North East Delhi, East Delhi, and West Delhi, South Delhi is yet to see parties pitching Purvanchali candidates for the Lok Sabha.

However, owing to the strong anti-incumbency against INC's Shri Ramesh Kumar Singh (OBC-Jat) in 2014, and the growing popularity of Shri Narendra Modi, BJP's candidate Shri Ramesh Bidhuri (OBC-Gujjar) won. Shri Ramesh Kumar was billed as the 'worst performing MP' for having spent only Rs 3.03 crore of the over Rs 10 crore allocated under MPLADS (MP Local Area Development Scheme). This segment was a stronghold of Shri Sajjan Kumar, Ramesh's brother but he was denied a a ticket due to his conviction in the 1984 riots case. Shri Devinder Singh Shehrawat, a prominent Jat leader of AAP finished second. The Muslim votes went to the AAP and INC, and those of the SCs were divided between AAP, INC, BSP and other independent candidates. The division of votes made it easier for the BJP.

To pose a challenge to the renominated Ramesh Bidhuri, a Jat candidate was fielded by Congress in 2019 – Shri Vijender Singh, a professional boxer. Unfortunately, he could not even recover his deposit. Shri Raghav Chadha (Sikh) contested on AAP's symbol trying to woo voters by propagating a 'clean, educated' image. This is the only PC where AAP pushed Congress to the third position in the 2019 elections. It is evident from the post-poll scenario that indeed caste played a role in South Delhi constituency but people voted more on the face of PM Shri Narendra Modi as well as the development projects of the ruling BJP.

⁵⁴ Bharat, E. (2024, March 22). दक्षिणी दिल्ली लोकसभा सीट पर गुर्जर मतदाताओं का वर्चस्व, जातीय समीकरण साधने में कौन होगा कामयाब - South Delhi Lok Sabha Seat. *ETV Bharat News*.

Municipal Corporation of Delhi

Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is the municipal corporation that governs most of Delhi. It is one of three municipalities in the National Capital Territory of Delhi, the others being New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) which administers the New Delhi area, and the Delhi Cantonment Board which administers the Delhi cantonment area. The MCD is among the largest municipal bodies in the world providing civic services to a population of about 20 million citizens in the capital city of Delhi. It is headed by the Mayor of Delhi, who presides over elected councillors from 250 wards.⁵⁵ The annual budget of the corporation is above ₹16,000 crore.

MCD came into existence on 7 April 1958 under an Act of Parliament. Prior to that DMC (Delhi Municipal Committee) was the principal civic body of Delhi. The 1993 amendment of the Act brought about fundamental changes in composition, functions, governance and administration of the corporation.

In 2012, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi was 'trifurcated', i.e. split into three smaller municipal corporations – North Delhi Municipal Corporation, South Delhi Municipal Corporation, and East Delhi Municipal Corporation. This act was stated as an attempt to redraw political borders so that the then-Congress administration in Delhi could make inroads into the civic body, which was traditionally a BJP bastion.⁵⁶ While it was done to decentralise the large body, the trifurcation divided resources unequally leading to a financial crisis in the civic bodies. The functioning became inefficient with increased employees, and increased costs, resulting in unequal distribution of assets and liabilities. Trouble escalated after the AAP came to power in the Assembly in 2015 and the BJP had since, constantly blamed the AAP for not paying its dues, while the latter blamed corruption in the MCDs for the financial crisis.

The BJP Delhi unit had been in favour of the merger and pursued it with the central leadership. Hence, the Union Government approved the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill to merge the 3 municipal corporations back into a single body which was passed by the Parliament in 2022. This move is politically significant too as the BJP wanted to showcase trifurcation as the reason behind the crisis and prove that a 'historical wrong' had been corrected by them.

MCD Elections 2022 Analysis

MCD is the only Municipal Corporation in Delhi that is elected directly by the people. The most recent elections to this local government body took place in 2022. This was the first election to the municipal corporation since its reunification in May 2022. The elections were held on 4 December

⁵⁵ [Municipal Corporation of Delhi](#)

⁵⁶ Rajput, A. (2022, March 9). *Explained: What the BJP hopes to gain by merging Delhi's three MCD*. The Indian Express.

2022 to elect 250 councillors. The votes were counted and the results were declared on 7 December 2022.

Party/Year	2017	2022
BJP	36.08%	39.09%
AAP	21.09%	42.05%
INC	21.09%	11.68%
Independents	8.80%	3.46%

Table 13: Party-wise vote share in MCD Elections in 2017 & 2022

Source: Statistical Reports, State Election Commission, NCT of Delhi

Contrary to the exit polls that predicted a clean sweep by the AAP, the saffron party restricted the former below 150 (134) in the contest for 250 wards. The BJP did not fare as badly as expected, grabbing a three-digit figure (104). Congress was a distant third with a win in 9 wards and Independents in 3 of them.⁵⁷

This election which played out more like a State poll between the BJP and AAP, was a major flip from the last election in 2017 when the BJP won 181 wards to AAP's 49 wards (out of 272 wards). Even in 2012, when AAP hadn't entered the contest, the BJP was leading with 138 seats as compared to Congress' 77. Apart from a 3% increase in this election from 2017, the saffron party got a higher vote share than it got in the 2020 Vidhan Sabha Election (38.50%). Contrastingly AAP's vote share fell significantly from 54% in 2020.⁵⁸

Data shows that upscale neighbourhoods of South Delhi saw the lowest voter turnout, while rural pockets and parts of Northeast Delhi saw the highest polling percentages. In terms of key issues in the elections, most parties had their focus on road improvement, sanitation and garbage management, air pollution and corruption-free MCD.

Besides facing high anti-incumbency, the BJP lacked a state leader whose popularity could match Arvind Kejriwal's, and the MCD under it was unable to shake the perception of being steeped in corruption and marred by inefficiency. Moreover, the loss can be attributed to the focus on national issues, polarisation and internal security which did not gel with the electorate. Some believe that the BJP top leadership sacrificed Delhi for Gujarat Elections held in the same period. The situation was

⁵⁷ Rathi, P. (2022, December 7). Delhi MCD elections 2022: What led to AAP's win in civic polls — An analysis. *CNBCTV18*.

⁵⁸ Pti. (2022, December 7). MCD election results 2022: Even in defeat, BJP's vote share rises by 3 per cent. *The Times of India*.

such that PM Modi did not hold a single rally to bloom lotus in MCD. Some reports highlighted the party insiders saying there was intense infighting in the Delhi BJP unit without a competent State President in the last few years.⁵⁹ Notwithstanding, BJP managed to stun with a better-than-expected performance which may plausibly be due to the local networks its councillors have built over the past 15 years. The party retained its support base among the upper and upper middle-class voters with its negative campaigning against the Kejriwal government including the excise policy case.⁶⁰

Moreover, AAP focused on beneficiaries of its government schemes from electricity subsidy to free bus rides for women. Most of these beneficiaries reside in the poorer neighbourhoods such as unauthorised colonies, JJ clusters, and rural villages. It used the BJP argument of ‘double engine’ of its own with the same party ruling the state and the civic body – ‘Kejriwal ki sarkar, Kejriwal ka parshad’ – which stood well with the middle-class voters. AAP compared the condition of schools and hospitals under the AAP-controlled state government to those under the BJP-ruled MCD, selling his ‘Delhi model’ of governance. AAP attacked the BJP on the reunification and delimitation exercise claiming that it could to any extent to remain in power.

The Congress Party, not too far removed Sheila Dixit’s reign, still had local roots in 2017, winning 32 wards and significantly splitting the anti-BJP vote in the city. But in 2022, the majority of the anti-BJP vote was swepted by the AAP.

⁵⁹ Chaturvedi, R. M. (2022, December 7). BJP raised national issues in MCD polls, AAP sold double-engine model. *The Economic Times*.

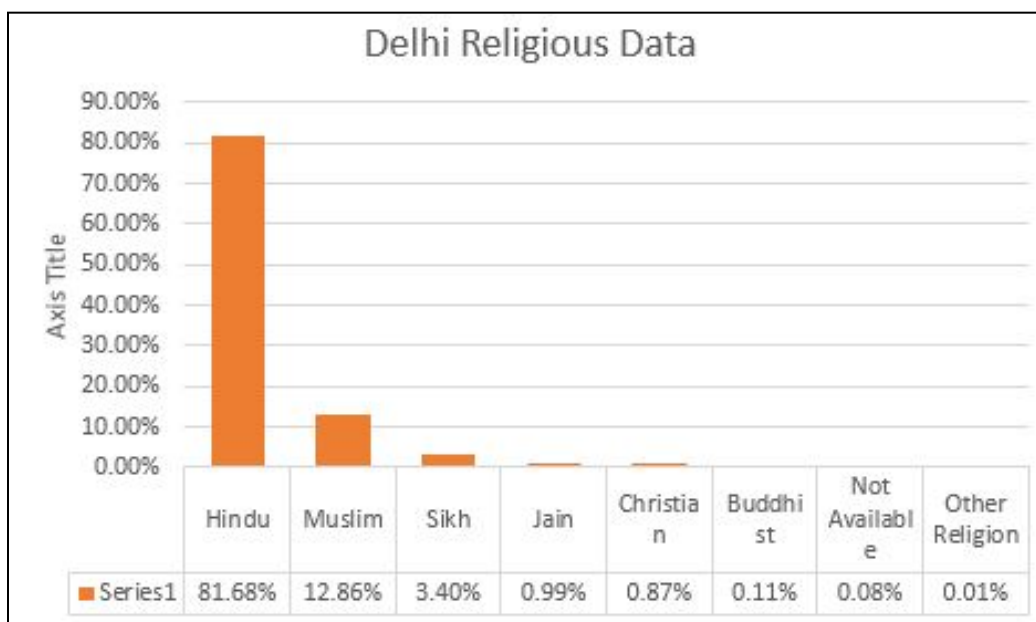
⁶⁰ The Hindu Bureau. (2024, March 23). *Watch | What was the New Delhi Excise Policy all about, and why is Arvind Kejriwal in trouble?* [Video]. The Hindu.

Major Voter Groups

The people of Delhi have remained loyal to the Congress most of the time since Independence, as reflected in the results of the various elections held in Delhi. The popularity of the Congress in Delhi was largely because it received support from all sections of society. Things changed in Delhi's politics mainly after the 1989 Lok Sabha election, when the BJP emerged as an important political player in the city's politics. The BJP's success during that election resulted from the shift amongst the upper castes in Delhi towards the BJP. Even though the BJP has witnessed success and failure in its electoral journey in Delhi, the upper castes have remained loyal to the BJP even when the party fared badly. On the other hand, the OBCs, the Dalits, and the Muslims have remained faithful to the Congress for a long time.

The National Capital does not have a single predominant community – none of the communities residing in the territory account to more than 20% of the total population. The SC category makes up the largest share of the population, i.e., 17% while there are 14% Muslims in the city. Apart from the native residents, Delhi hosts a large migrant population from the neighbouring states of Haryana, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Delhi is a particular state where caste and electoral behavior do not align neatly. Historically, parties have provided representation to all major demographic groups and have drawn support across caste boundaries. There are some historical preferential alignments, like the Punjabi Khatri and the BJP. But by and large, parties mobilise across castes.



Graph 3: Religious groups in Delhi

Source: Based on Census of India, 2011

Caste	Percentage of Population
Brahmin	10%
Baniya/Vaishya	8%
Jat	7%
Gujjar	5%
Punjabi Khatri	5%
Yadav	2%
Rajput	1%

Table 14: Important Caste Group among Hindus

Source: Based on estimates found by various political parties

Brahmins

Numerically significant, the major Brahmin sub-castes include: Bairagi, Bias, Gaur and Sanandhya. After migrating from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the last 30 to 40 years, a large number of Kanyakubja, Suryuparee, Bhatt, Maithili, Sakaldiwiya, Sanadhya, Gauda, Tyagi, and Bhumihar Brahmins have settled in the National Capital Territory.⁶¹

Despite having a large population, the participation of city Brahmins in the local politics is not in the same proportion. Prior to Smt. Sheila Dikshit taking over as the Chief Minister in 1998, there was no Brahmin CM in Delhi and politics was dominated either by Punjabi Khatri, Jats or Gujjars. Moreover, Brahmins are scattered across the national capital with only the East Delhi constituency having more than 10% of them. As per data, six Assembly seats have more than 20 per cent Brahmin voters – Babarpur, Krishna Nagar, Ixmi Nagar, Rithala, Kirari and Badarpur.

Voting patterns across the four Assembly elections held in Delhi since it got statehood suggest that the Brahmin voters in Delhi have had a strong preference for the BJP. In the 1998 Assembly election, the BJP was defeated and its popularity amongst the Brahmin voters declined; still, most Brahmin voters in Delhi voted for the party. While 46% of the Brahmin voters voted for the BJP, only 43% of them voted for the Congress. With the entry of BSP into the city's politics, the support for both the BJP and Congress among the Brahmins had declined.

⁶¹ Pioneer, D. (2013, December 4). Fight for Brahmin votes intensifies. *The Pioneer*.

The Brahmins also showed an inclination towards the AAP in 2013, breaking their pattern of voting for the BJP. Notably, in Assembly Election of 2020, the share of representation of Brahmins among AAP candidates was significantly higher than among the BJP and the Congress.⁶² The caste agnosticism professed by the AAP comes along a representation heavily skewed towards traditional elites.

Table 15: Major leaders from the Brahmin community

Name	Party	Responsibilities held
Shri Kapil Mishra	BJP	Vice President, Delhi BJP
Shri Om Prakash Sharma	BJP	MLA, Vishwas Nagar
Shri Manoj Tiwari	BJP	ex-President, Delhi Bjp and incumbent MP, North East Delhi
Shri Satish Upadhyay	BJP	ex-President, Delhi, BJP and incumbent Vice Chairman, NDMC
Shri Raaj Kumr Anand	AAP	MLA, Patel Nagar
Shri Rajesh Rishi	AAP	MLA, Janakpuri
Smt. Sheila Dikshit	INC	ex-Chief Minister of Delhi
Shri Mukesh Sharma	INC	Chief Spokesperson, DPCC

Punjabi Khatri

Like the Brahmins, the Punjabi Khatri also have a sizeable presence in Delhi, as they constitute about 5% of Delhi's electorate. Delhi's economy has been traditionally dominated by Punjabi Khatri since they migrated to the region post-partition. Numerically they are not as large as the Brahmins, but they are more concentrated compared to the Brahmins. After the new delimitation, with the change in the boundaries of the Assembly constituencies, the Punjabi Khatri voters seem to be a little more dispersed, but still constitute more than one-fifth of the electorate in about 18 Assembly constituencies.

They have seen their representation sharply decline since the BJP peaked in the 1990s. Over the years in various elections, the Punjabi voters voted for the BJP in an overwhelming majority. Despite losing

⁶² Verniers, G. (2020, February 17). Delhi verdict: 30 charts and maps that help understand AAP's 'post-identity politics.' *Scroll.in*.

three Assembly elections in a row since 1998, its popularity amongst the Punjabi Khatri voters has not declined to a great extent. The share of the Punjabi vote for the Congress has always remained low. Even though the Congress managed to win the 2008 Assembly election, its popularity amongst the Punjabi Khatri voters remained very low—it was less than the Congress average vote share in the state.

AAP’s debut did hurt the BJP’s support amongst the community but the latter managed to bounce back in 2020. In fact, the collapse of the Congress saw the BJP gaining 20% among Punjabi Khatri. In 2020 VS polls, the Congress and the BJP fielded more Punjabi candidates (mostly Punjabi Khatri), while those did not find much representation on the AAP’s candidates list (6%).

Table 16: Major leaders from the Punjabi Khatri community

Name	Party	Responsibilities held
Shri Nalin Kohli	BJP	BJP National Spokesperson
Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi	BJP	ex-MoS, External Affairs
Shri Virendra Sachdev	BJP	President, BJP Delhi
Smt. Shelly Oberoi	AAP	Mayor, MCD
Shri Subhash Chopra	INC	Chairman, Election Management Committee, Delhi
Smt. Alka Lamba	INC	President, All India Mahila Congress

Rajputs

Some important sub clans include: Rawe, Gohil, Tomar, Jadaun, Chandel, Khanzada, Gautam, Rathore, etc. They are widely spread all over Delhi, which puts them in a disadvantageous position in electoral politics. After the new delimitation, they form a sizeable proportion of voters in Malviya Nagar, and Dwarka Assembly constituencies. There is an absence of leadership among Rajputs, both within the BJP and the Congress. No political parties see them as a vote bank and hence, there’s no serious effort to woo their support.

The Rajput voters too are less polarised in favour of one political party. There seems to be some competition between the Congress and the BJP for the Rajput vote, but largely they seem to favour the latter. The 2008 Assembly election witnessed a decline in the popularity of the Congress amongst Rajput voters, and a marginal increase in the popularity of the BJP among them.

Like the Brahmins, the Rajputs also showed an inclination towards the AAP in 2013. While many upper-caste Hindus may have still preferred the BJP or the Congress, the bulk of the upper-caste votes went to the AAP in the following Assembly polls. Yet, in 2020, BJP managed to regain some of the lost Rajput voteshare which seemed to have come from the Congress's kitty.

In 2023, a lot of BJP leaders from Delhi attempting to woo voters by building statues of warriors caused a stir among the Rajput community. While attributing characters of Durgadas Rathore, and Samrat Mihir Bhoj, essentially Rajput warriors as belonging to the Teli and Gujjar communities respectively, they hurt the sentiments of the Rajputs.⁶³ Moreover, the anger of Rajput community with the BJP in UP and Rajasthan over under-representation in ticket distribution and a BJP Minister equating Rajputs to labourers, dealt the saffron party significant blows.⁶⁴ The effects may not have been translated in Delhi but the support has surely declined.

Table 17: Major leaders from the Rajput community

Name	Party	Responsibilities held
Shri Mohan Singh Bisht	BJP	MLA, Karawal Nagar
Shri Pavan Rana	BJP	General Secretary, BJP Delhi
Shri Manish Sisodia	AAP	ex-Deputy Chief Minister and incumbent MLA, Patparganj

Vaishyas/Baniyas

The community is composed of several sub-castes including the Agarwal, Khandelwal, Maheshwari, Oswal, Porwad and Shrimali Baniyas, among others. Vaishya community, despite being concentrated in various locations of Delhi, was not in sizeable numbers in many Assembly constituencies so as to matter in the electoral contest. Things seem to have gone slightly in favour of voters belonging to this community after the redrawing of the boundaries of Assembly constituencies, by way of the fourth delimitation exercise.

Though they have voted for the BJP in large numbers, they cannot be classified as the vote bank of a particular political party. After the 1993 Vidhan Sabha elections, their support for the BJP has declined; yet it was consistently above the 50% mark in the 1998, 2003 and 2008 Assembly elections. And the Congress, despite winning those elections, saw a decline in its popularity among the Baniyas.

⁶³ Anand, A. (2022, March 6). Rajput body writes to PM Modi, accuses Delhi BJP leaders of distorting history. *India Today*.

⁶⁴ India Today. (2024, June 4). *BJP washout in phase 1, fuelled by Rajput anger in UP*. India Today.

However in 2013, the AAP succeeded in taking away a big chunk of the BJP's Bania votes. Among the Jains and Banias (the community to which Shri Arvind Kejriwal belongs), the party ended up with 29% of the vote and gave the BJP a decent fight.

Post 2016, in the wake of demonetisation, the traders' ire for the BJP often dominated the political discourse. However, when Surat voted almost en masse for the BJP a year later, it was seen as a sign of the community's continued support for the party.⁶⁵ Yet again in 2020, BJP's biggest setback came from the Vaishya community with a 7% fall in their support to the party and AAP directly benefitting from the loss.

Table 18: Major leaders from the Baniya community

Name	Party	Responsibilities held
Shri Vijay Goel	BJP	ex-MP, Chandni Chowk
Shri Adesh Kumar Gupta	BJP	ex-President, BJP Delhi
Shri Vijender Gupta	BJP	ex-Leader of Opposition in State Assembly and incumbent MLA, Rohini
Shri Arvind Kejriwal	AAP	Chief Minister of Delhi
Shri Somnath Bharti	AAP	MLA, Malviya Nagar
Shiv Charan Goel	AAP	MLA, Moti Nagar
Shri Narain Dass Gupta	AAP	MP, Rajya Sabha
Shri Rajesh Gupta	AAP	MLA, Wazirpur
Smt. Swati Maliwal	AAP	MP, Rajya Sabha
Shri Jai Prakash Aggarwal	INC	ex-MP, North East Delhi

Jats

To begin with, the Jats and the Gujjars had ample landed property in the city, making them part of the propertied class, giving them the bargaining power in the realm of political representation and securing a good place in Delhi's power structure. The most aggressive ticket seekers in the Delhi elections have

⁶⁵ Bhardwaj, D. (2019, March 13). *Battle for Baniya votes at the heart of Aap-BJP war in Delhi*. ThePrint.

been the Jats and the Gujjars who have emerged as the most determined of political climbers. Jats have a strong presence in the West Delhi, North West Delhi and South Delhi seat.

Jats were a formidable presence in Delhi politics because of two prominent Jat leaders – Shri Sajjan Kumar of Congress and Shri Saheb Singh Varma of the BJP. After Shri Saheb Singh Varma's untimely death and Shri Sajjan Kumar's links to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, the BJP and Congress struggled to find a credible, new face to represent the Jat population. Both parties have tried to fill the void — the BJP by portraying Shri Parvesh Verma, son of Shri Sahib Singh Verma, and the Congress by bringing up Shri Ramesh Kumar, brother of Shri Sajjan Kumar. But neither of them has been able to match the stature of their father and brother, respectively. A young Jat face within the city unit of the party can help in a sizeable shift amongst the Jat voters in favour of the BJP.

The Jats have favored the BJP since the 1993 assembly elections. Although the Congress Party gained some support among the Jats since the first assembly election, the BJP remained their first choice. The BJP may have faced a dent with the entry of AAP with 31% and 38% of the Jat community voting for the latter (which came from those who earlier voted for INC). Yet BJP remains their most preferred party.⁶⁶ They have been loyal to PM Shri Narendra Modi in 2014, 2019 as well as 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Despite the wrath of the community against the BJP relating to the Farm Bills and ill-treatment of the women wrestlers in their protest against the alleged sexual assault by an ex-BJP MP⁶⁷, the community has elected BJP's Jat candidate from West Delhi, Kamaljeet Sehrawat.

Table 19: Major leaders from the Jat community

Name	Party	Responsibilities held
Shri Om Prakash Dhankar	BJP	Incharge, State Prabhari
Shri Jayender Kumar Dabas	BJP	ex-Leader of House, North MCD
Shri Parvesh Singh Verma	BJP	ex-MP, West Delhi
Shri Kamaljeet Sehrawat	BJP	MP, West Delhi
Shri Kailash Gahlot	AAP	Minister of Transport and Environment
Shri Naresh Balyan	AAP	ex-MLA, Uttam Nagar
Shri Bhupinder Singh Joon	AAP	MLA, Bijwasan

⁶⁶ *Delhi polls: Aap- catch-all party that brought communities, castes under one net* . The Indian Express. (2020b, February 14).

⁶⁷ Bureau, T. H. (2023, May 30). *Women wrestlers "humiliated."*

Shri Virender Singh Kadian	AAP	MLA, Deklhi Cantt
Shri Anil Chaudhary	INC	ex-President, DPCC
Shri Ajay Maken	INC	Rajya Sabha MP and Treasurer, AICC

Gujjars

The Gujjars are not as dominant a political force as they are in Rajasthan, but they play an important role in the city’s politics. They are about 5 per cent of Delhi’s electorate. Gujjars are the largest community in South Delhi PC and have considerable numbers in East Delhi too.

Traditionally, around 70% of Gujjars have voted for the established political parties like the BJP and Congress, with latter gaining the larger share except for the 1993 Assembly polls. In the 1998 Assembly election, when the Congress came to power defeating the BJP — 44% of the Gujjar votes went in favour of the Congress while 29% voted for the BJP. Since then, the community has remained tilted in favour of the Congress, but a large proportion of Gujjar votes has remained divided amongst other parties, BJP taking the largest share amongst them.

Gujjars, along with other OBC groups switched over to the AAP in 2013 in large numbers. Even in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, these were the only communities, apart from the Dalits and Muslims, among whom the AAP continued to do well despite the ‘Modi wave’. However, the Gujjar vote, which had gone towards Congress and smaller parties in 2015, got completely polarised in 2020, with the BJP winning majority support among them. In 2024, South Delhi seat, which has been a BJP bastion, saw a Gujjar vs Gujjar contest, and BJP won again.⁶⁸

Table 20: Major leaders from the Gujjar community

Name	Party	Responsibilities held
Shri Ramesh Bidhuri	BJP	ex-MP, South Delhi
Shri Ramvir Singh Bidhuri	BJP	Leader of Opposition in State Assembly
Shri Brahm Singh Tanwar	BJP	ex-MLA, Chattarpur
Shri Alka Gurjar	BJP	Co-incharge, State Prabhari
Shri Sahi Ram Pehalwan	AAP	MLA, Tughlakabad

⁶⁸ Srivastava, A. (n.d.). *Lok Sabha polls: Gurjar vs Gurjar in South Delhi*. The New Indian Express.

Shri Kartar Singh Tanwar	AAP	MLA, Chattarpur
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Other Backward Classes (except Jats and Gujjars)

Post-Mandal politics, especially in North India, is largely perceived in terms of the intense mobilisation of the OBC voters and Delhi is no exception. This broad category ‘OBC’ (other than Jats and Gujjars) comprises various castes such as Yadav, Kurmi, Lodha, Teli, etc. and are widely spread all over the city, not surprisingly having a presence in various Assembly constituencies. Since the proportion of the OBC voters is large enough and spread all over Delhi, the redrawing of boundaries has hardly altered their numerically dominant position. Post delimitation, Chandni Chowk, East Delhi and South Delhi constituencies are major OBC strongholds.

However, among the OBCs, there are only three groups represented. The Jats make 13% of the MLAs over time. The two other groups represented are the Gujjars (5%) and the Yadavs (a smaller number). It is striking that no other OBC group has ever been represented in the state assembly. Barring Shri Surender Saini in Minto Road in 1972, all backward classes MLAs have belonged to these two groups.

The OBC votes, unlike other communities have seemed to be floating – after supporting the BJP in 1993, they voted for the Congress in the following two elections; and 2008 saw a keen contest between the political parties for the OBC vote. BSP’s entry turned heads toward the party and Congress saw a decline in popularity among OBCs. Further, in 2013 with AAP coming into the poll scenario, the OBCs including Gujjars, Yadavs and lower OBCs, shifted en-bloc to AAP. The 2015 polls saw a similar trend but in 2020 the BJP swept major support from the lower OBCs while AAP retained the base of Gujjars and Yadavs.⁶⁹

The BJP has gone from being a party, purely of upper castes to one with a strong support base of OBCs across India rallying behind PM Shri Narendra Modi who belongs to the OBC (Teli) community.

Table 21: Major leaders from the OBC community

Name	Party	Responsibilities held
Shri Naresh Yadav	AAP	MLA, Mehrauli

Scheduled Castes (Dalits)

The broad categorization ‘Dalits’ encompasses many castes and in Delhi including Chamars, Balmikis, Dhobis, etc. SCs constitute around 17.68% of Delhi’s population. The exodus of the middle class to

⁶⁹ *Delhi polls: Aap- catch-all party that brought communities, castes under one net* . The Indian Express. (2020a, February 14).

the NCR towns of Noida, Gurgaon and Faridabad and the proliferation of unauthorized colonies, coupled with post-delimitation demography have meant that in all seven constituencies the largest percentage of voters are from the SCs and OBCs, rendering the NCT of Delhi as the first SC-OBC stronghold.

12 Assembly Constituencies are reserved for the Scheduled Castes since the delimitation exercise. In addition to the seats that are reserved for the Dalits, there are a few other assembly constituencies where the Dalits are in sizeable numbers – Badali, Nangloi Jat, Wazirpur, Model Town, Rajendra Nagar, Chhatarpur and Shahdara.

The Dalits seemed to be a natural political ally of the Congress before the BSP made its serious presence in the city’s politics during the 2008 Assembly election. Despite losing the first election, the Congress a large number of Dalits had voted for it. This support only went on strengthening until their shift toward the BSP with its maximum support base amongst the Ravidas Jatav subcaste (Chamar), followed by Balmikis (a large number of Congress MLAs belonged to this community).

Soon after, AAP came to represent the rebellion of the underclass, Dalits and minorities, against the tyranny of the Bania-Brahmin-Sikh dominated BJP-Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) alliance and the Punjabi-Muslim-centric Congress. The AAP in its spectacular debut in the 2013 Assembly elections had the majority of the urban poor and Dalits (principally Balmikis) rooting for it – 36% of the Dalits voted for the AAP in the 2013 election as opposed to 29% for the BJP and 23% for the Congress. The Balmikis not only identified with the AAP election symbol (the broom), but also took ownership and were amongst the earliest foot soldiers and cadre of the party.⁷⁰ AAP retained most of its Dalit share in 2015. The 2020 election results showed that nearly three-fourths (72%) of Jatavs, two-thirds of Balmikis and two-thirds of the other Dalit castes reposed their faith in the party yet again.

Table 22: Major leaders from the SC community

Name	Party	Responsibilities held
Shri Yogender Chandolia	BJP	MP, North West Delhi
Shri Hans Raj Hans	BJP	ex-MP, North West Delhi
Shri Rakhi Birla	AAP	Deputy Speaker, Delhi Legislative Assembly
Shri Vishesh Ravi	AAP	MLA, Karol Bagh
Shri Girish Soni	AAP	ex-Minister for SC/ST, Gov. of Delhi NCT

⁷⁰ *A new socio-economic group*. Frontline. (2018, April 24).

Shri Ajay Dutt	AAP	Ex- Chairman, Committee of Welfare of SC/ST
Shri Rajendra Pal Gautam	AAP	MLA, Seemapuri
Shri Udit Raj	INC	ex-MP, North West Delhi
Shri Krishna Tirath	INC	ex-MP, North West Delhi
Shri Rajesh Liloithia	INC	Patel Nagar
Shri Veer Singh Dhingan	INC	ex-MLA, Patel Nagar

Muslims

Muslims constitute around 9.5% of the city’s population and play an important role in the city’s politics in about 9 to 10 Assembly constituencies – Chandni Chowk, Matia Mahal, Ballimaran, Gandhi Nagar, Seemapuri, Seelampur, Babarpur, Mustafabad, Karawal Nagar, and Kirari. Most of the Muslim-dominated constituencies have elected Muslim representatives; so over the years, various Assemblies in Delhi have had 7 to 8 representatives from the community.

Traditionally, a support base of the Congress, Muslims have either supported the party or elected independent candidates from the community. Sometimes they vote for the Congress as the only option in order to keep the BJP away from power. The absence of any choice other than the BJP and the Congress has made them retain their allegiance with the Congress in Delhi over the past several elections. INC wasn’t very popular among the Muslims during the 1993 election but its preference among the community has only strengthened.

However, in 2008 some of INC’s Muslim voteshare was eaten up by the BSP. And in 2015, the Muslims voted en-bloc for the AAP by not only jettisoning Congress but also refusing to split their vote for Muslim-centric parties such as the Peace Party. They had found a better alternative to defeat the BJP. The 2020 election saw the greatest ever consolidation of Muslims in favour of AAP, greater than that for the Congress. Around 83% Muslims voted for the AAP raising their portion in AAP’s total voteshare by 20%, even more than that of the Dalits.

Table 23: Major leaders from the Muslim community

Name	Party	Responsibilities held
Smt. Shazia Ilmi	BJP	National Spokesperson
Shri Aaley Mohammad Iqbal	AAP	Deputy Mayor, MCD

Shri Shoaib Iqbal	AAP	MLA, Matia Mahal
Shri Asim Ahmed Khan	AAP	ex-MLA, Matia Mahal
Shri Haji Yunus	AAP	MLA, Mustafabad
Shri Meem Afzal	INC	National Spokesperson, INC
Shri Chaudhary Matim Ahmed	INC	ex.MLA, Seelampur
Shri Hasan Ahmed	INC	ex-MLA, Mustafabad
Shri Haroon Yusuf	INC	ex-MLA, Ballimaran

Sikhs

In numerical terms, Sikhs may not hold a big number (3-4% of the population) to matter in an electoral contest, but what makes them important in the city's politics is their concentration in a few constituencies and their influence to some extent amongst the Sikh voters in other states, mainly Punjab, where they have a huge majority. Sikhs form an important vote bank in the Assembly constituencies of Rajouri Garden, Hari Nagar, Tilak Nagar, Jangpura, Moti Nagar, and Sadar Bazar.

Unlike the misconception, BJP is not the first choice of Sikhs. Nearly 90 per cent of the Sikh votes had gotten divided between the Congress and the BJP, and except for the 1993 Assembly election, both the Congress and the BJP got more or less equal shares of their vote. Since 2013, the AAP has had its fair share of votes. In 2015, during the first AAP wave, 57% of Sikhs had voted for the party. The figure had gone up to 67%, the highest gains made by AAP in any community in 2020. The BJP, on the other hand lost 6% of Sikh votes after its alliance with the SAD had run into trouble.

Table 24: Major leaders from the Sikh community

Name	Party	Responsibilities held
Shri Manjinder Singh Sirsa	BJP	National Secretary
Shri Harmeet Singh Kalka	BJP	ex-MLA, Kalkaji
Shri Arvinder Singh Lovely	BJP	ex-DPCC President

Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee

Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee or DSGMC is an autonomous organisation which manages Gurdwaras in the city of Delhi. It also manages various educational institutions, hospitals, old age homes, libraries and other charitable institutions in Delhi. In 1971, the Delhi Sikh Gurdwaras Act was passed by the Parliament, providing for a committee to be elected by Sikh vote. Elections took place under the supervision of government authority and the new body called Delhi Sikh Gurdwaras Management Committee (DSGMC) came into existence in 1974. Under the provisions of the Act, the elections must take place every four years. It is the counterpart of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC)⁷¹ in Delhi but operates independently.

The DSGMC comprises 55 members, 46 of whom are elected and 9 are co opted. Out of the nine coopted members, two represent the Singh Sabhas of Delhi, one the SGPC, four the Takhts at Amritsar Sahib, Anandpur Sahib, Patna Sahib and Nanded, and two those Sikhs of Delhi who do not want to or cannot contest elections but whose services can be of value to the committee. The eligibility norms to become an elected member of the committee require a person to be minimum 25 years of age, an 'amritdhari' Sikh, who does not trim his hair, does not take alcoholic drinks and is able to read and write in Gurumukhi script.

The organisation is governed by a chairman and a president as per the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1971. The elections to the DSGMC are conducted by the Directorate of Gurdwara Elections⁷² which comes under the Government of NCT of Delhi. Apart from ensuring a smooth election process, the department is also responsible for carrying out amendments in Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Act. Only Sikhs who have unshorn hair and follow the religious code of conduct including five tenets, i.e, Amritdhari Sikhs are eligible to vote in the elections.

Sikhs may constitute only 5% of Delhi's population, however, they still exercise considerable influence on politics in the national capital, making political parties vie for the support of the community, believed to vote as a block. There are about eight lakh (in general) and almost four lakh (for DSGMC) Sikh voters in Delhi. Naturally, the cash rich DSGMC which has a budget of Rs 100 crore to run hospitals, schools and colleges and over 800 'Singh Sabhas' or Mohalla gurdwaras, plays a crucial role in Delhi Politics.⁷³

⁷¹ [SGPC](#)

⁷² [Directorate of Gurdwara Elections](#)

⁷³ Nibber, G. S. (2020, January 19). Delhi Assembly polls 2020: Sikhs' influence greater than the sum of its numbers. *Hindustan Times*.

Influence of DSGMC on Delhi Politics

The Congress party once managed the affairs of Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) through Shri Jathedar Santokh Singh and later in bits and parts through Sarna brothers — Shri Paramjit Singh and Shri Harvinder Singh (Alkali Dali - Delhi).⁷⁴ Then came the three in a row feat of Shiromani Akali Dal. For the past decade, the Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) has had a considerable hold over the DSGMC and the Delhi Sikhs in general. The first two victories of the SAD were led by Manjit Singh GK, son of Santokh Singh, before he was upstaged by Shri Manjinder Singh Sirsa, few months into SAD's second win that came in 2017. He took over as President of DSGMC and had also won the Rajouri Garden seat for Delhi Assembly on an SAD-BJP ticket.⁷⁵ In 2021, SAD clinched a third term in the committee but Manjinder Singh Sirsa lost to Shri Paramjit Singh Sarna in Punjabi Bagh by 469 votes. Nonetheless, he was nominated a member by the SGPC and elected the President. The BJP had supported GK's Jago Party while the Congress backed the Sarna-led Akali Dali (Delhi). Whereas AAP had backed out of the fray in 2017 when its MLAs did not unite behind the Panthic Sewa Dal (PSD) that it had propped up.⁷⁶

The immediate past has seen the body move into the hands of BJP through the manoeuvres of Sirsa. In a massive setback for the Badals, Shri Manjinder Singh Sirsa deserted SAD and joined the BJP on December 1, 2021 only weeks before the Punjab Assembly polls. He resigned as the President of DSGMC but withdrew the resignation, exactly a month later, a day before the meeting of DSGMC, whose new committee was yet to be constituted after the elections in August. According to Shri Manjinder Sirsa, he continued to discharge his duties despite resigning since it wasn't accepted because of technical and legal issues. He withdrew the resignation in view of the collapse of the administrative system of DSGMC, non-payment of salaries and bonus to employees of DSGMC and its institutions, etc.⁷⁷ This move was seen to be taken at the behest of the BJP whom the political rivals accused of having interfered in the religious affairs of the Sikhs. Shri Manjinder Singh Sirsa continued to hold the post until the new committee was formed and Shri Harmeet Singh Kalka was made President after a heated controversy in the house.

SAD was hardly recovering from a major loss in the 2022 Punjab polls when Shri Harmeet Singh Kalka announced to disassociate with the party and form a separate one along with 31 elected members of the DSGMC. The new party formed was also called Shiromani Akali Dal (Delhi State) which Kalka

⁷⁴ *DSGMC firmly in control of BJP under Sirsa-Kalka Combine.* (n.d.). Punjab Today TV.

⁷⁵ Singh, I. (2019, March 16). Manjinder Singh Sirsa is new DSGMC chief. *The Times of India*.

⁷⁶ Nibber, G. S. (2017, February 22). MLAs divided in DSGMC polls, AAP backs out of fray. *Hindustan Times*.

⁷⁷ Express News Service, & Express News Service. (2022, January 1). *BJP leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa withdraws resignation as DSGMC chief.* The New Indian Express.

claimed would be a purely religious, non-political body. The move forced SAD (Badal) to expel Shri Harmeet Singh Kalka from its primary leadership.⁷⁸

DSGMC under Shri Harmeet Singh Kalka extended its support to the BJP during the MCD elections in 2022 and asked the Sikh Community members to vote for the candidates of the saffron party.⁷⁹ Fast forward to 2024, Shri Harmeet Singh Kalka and his party pledged support to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Lok Sabha polls, claiming that he had resolved Sikh issues ahead of the General Elections.⁸⁰ Most recently, around 1500 Sikhs, including some members of the DSGMC in Delhi joined BJP just before the Lok Sabha polls in Delhi.⁸¹ The induction drive served the purpose of its immediate goal of dealing the INDIA bloc a blow in Sikh-dominated areas in Delhi PCs such as West Delhi, North East Delhi, and Chandni Chowk. It was also meant to send a message to the Sikh community in Punjab that the party has been reaching out to after the hit it has taken over farm protests in recent years.

The next DSGMC polls will happen soon after the Delhi Assembly polls in 2025 and all political parties in the fray are likely to leverage it for wooing the Sikh community in the upcoming elections.

⁷⁸ Nibber, G. S. (2022, March 16). DSGMC chief Kalka breaks away from SAD; expelled. *Hindustan Times*.

⁷⁹ Singh, I. (2022, November 27). DSGMC extends support to BJP in MCD elections. *The Times of India*.

⁸⁰ Service, T. N. (n.d.). *Kalka's party to support Modi*. Tribuneindia News Service.

⁸¹ Ani, & Ani. (2024, April 27). Unity in Diversity: 1,500 members of Sikh community join BJP in presence of Party President J P Nadda; Video.

The 2024 Picture

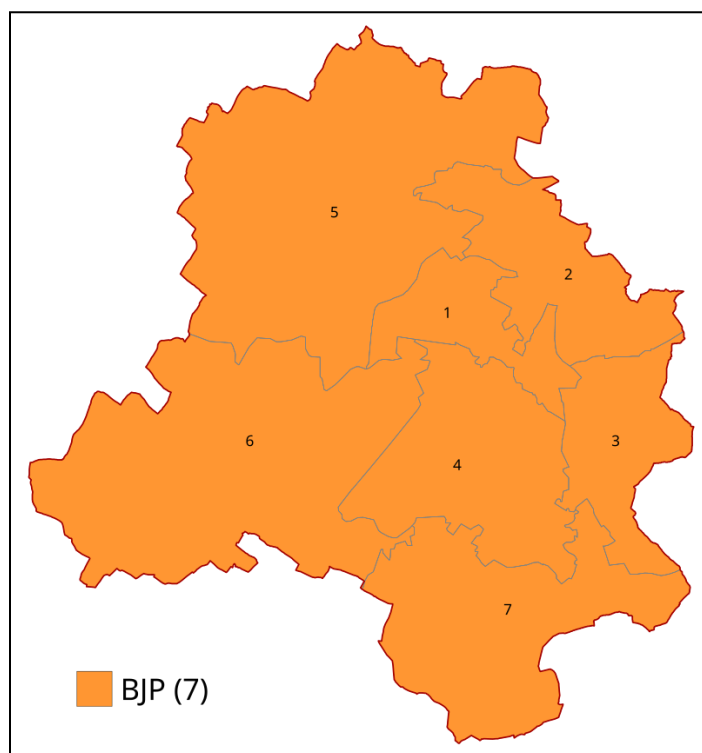
Party	Vote Share (%)
BJP	54.35
AAP	24.17
INC	18.91

Table 25: Vote share of political parties in 2024 Lok Sabha elections

Source: Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India

Election Results

The Bharatiya Janata Party won all seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi for the third time in a row, defeating



the Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress that came together under a 4-3 seat-sharing alliance to consolidate the anti-BJP votes. The voters of Delhi, in their verdict declared on 4th June, 2024, made it clear that while they backed AAP with consecutive victories with over 50% vote share in the State elections, they have reposed faith in the BJP to represent them in Parliament. The Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc, however, managed to reduce the BJP's vote share from 56.7% in 2019 to 54.35% in 2024. While the AAP got a vote share of 24.17%, the Congress bagged 18.91%.

BJP's performance in the national capital looks even more impressive when seen in context of its showing in other North India states such as Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana where its seat tally has dropped significantly. Its victory in Delhi is also noteworthy considering that the party was up against an alliance of the Aam Aadmi Party and Congress.

As it turns out, the combined vote share of the two parties went up marginally from 2019, but that will not prove to be enough to defeat the BJP in any of the seats. However, the margins of BJP's victory in

all of the seven seats have reduced significantly from 2019. A closer look at the results show that AAP benefitted more from alliance.⁸²

Campaign Strategy

The BJP's campaign centred around the work done by its government at the Centre and portraying AAP as a party mired in corruption. The BJP attacked the Congress for getting into an alliance with its own nemesis, denting the grand old party's prospects. As the AAP-Congress experiment failed, the BJP never missed an opportunity to call out the alliance for its "double standards" as the two parties fought against each other in Punjab. Even though the INDIA bloc tried to present a picture of togetherness, the attempts didn't work in the absence of joint rallies and major events.

AAP, on the other hand, had been struggling with the arrest of Key leaders like Shri Arvind Kejriwal, Shri Manish Sisodia, and Shri Sanjay Singh, raising questions about the political motivations behind these arrests. While Shri Arvind Kejriwal was in jail, his wife Smt. Sunita Kejriwal held roadshows for party candidates under the party's "Jail Ka Jawab Vote Se" campaign. AAP termed PM Narendra Modi a "dictator" who would go to any lengths to "destroy" AAP and other Opposition parties. However, contesting its first Lok Sabha poll as a national party, AAP found itself unable to leave a mark.

By replacing six of the seven sitting MPs, the BJP managed to rule out anti-incumbency. While it gambled on fresh faces such as Shri Praveen Khandelwal (Chandni Chowk) and Smt. Bansuri Swaraj (New Delhi), the only incumbent in the race was North East Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari. Shri Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Shri Harsh Malhotra, Smt. Kamaljeet Sehrawat and Shri Yogender Chandoliya won from South Delhi, East Delhi, West Delhi and North West Delhi respectively.

As far as poll issues are concerned, the idea of a developed India, questions surrounding employment, and calls for a socio-economic caste census had dominated poll rallies.

Arvind Kejriwal's Arrest

Moreover, the political landscape had been made more interesting by the Supreme Court's interim bail grant to Shri Arvind Kejriwal,⁸³ amidst the Delhi liquor policy case. Upon his release, Shri Arvind Kejriwal embarked on an aggressive campaign, framing his arrest as a result of his pro-people policies and accusing the ruling BJP of orchestrating his detention to undermine his government's welfare schemes. He portrayed himself as a victim of political vendettas, urging voters to support him as a bulwark against such persecution. Unfortunately, the anticipated sympathy wave could not materialise as also suggested by the pre-poll surveys.

⁸² Deb, A. (2024, June 4). How BJP dominated Delhi again despite losses in North India. *Scroll.in*.

⁸³ Rajagopal, K. (2024, May 24). *SC grants interim bail to Kejriwal till June 1; bars him from visiting CMO or signing any official files*. The Hindu

The INDIA bloc candidates in Delhi trailed in two out of three Assembly segments represented by senior AAP leaders who are in jail on corruption charges, data released by Delhi Chief Electoral Officer show. Shri Kuldeep Kumar, AAP's East Delhi candidate, trailed behind his BJP rival, Shri Harsh Malhotra, in the Patparganj Assembly segment, which is represented by former Deputy Chief Minister Shri Manish Sisodia. Similarly, Congress's Shri J.P. Agarwal from Chandni Chowk LS seat, got fewer votes than BJP candidate Shri Praveen Khandelwal in the Shakur Basti Assembly segment represented by former Deputy Chief Minister, Shri Satyendar Jain. However, in the New Delhi LS seat, AAP's Shri Somnath Bharti was ahead of BJP's Smt. Bansuri Swaraj in the New Delhi Assembly segment, represented by Chief Minister Shri Arvind Kejriwal.⁸⁴ These results assume significance given that the campaign of the BJP's Delhi unit was centred around the AAP government's "scams" and that the Delhi Assembly election is less than a year away.

Role of Scheduled Castes and Muslims

According to Delhi BJP president Shri Virendra Sachdeva, the biggest contributors towards BJP's win were members of the Scheduled Castes. Candidates of the BJP were ahead in 10 of the 12 reserved Assembly segments while the Opposition INDIA bloc candidates led in only two, as per the data released by the Delhi Chief Electoral Officer. The BJP candidates were in the lead in the reserved Assembly segments in all LS seats except South Delhi and North East Delhi where the INDIA bloc candidates led.

On the contrary, Muslims voted largely against the BJP yet they failed to swing it for the Alliance. They constitute around 12.9% of Delhi's population (as per 2011 census) with the highest percentage belonging to the North East PC. The biggest voter shift was recorded in Okhla, one of the five assembly seats in which BJP trailed in the last election. The difference between the votes for BJP and INC candidates swelled from 5,688 to 73,818 since the 2019 election. Other muslim-majority constituencies such as Chandni Chowk, Matia Mahal and Ballimaran also saw reduced vote share for the BJP. Though the highest voter turnout was registered in Muslim-dominated constituencies, it was fairly lesser than that in 2014 and 2019 which is being attributed for its impact on the results.

Impact of the AAP-Congress Alliance

The INDI Alliance could not materialise into a favourable electoral outcome for AAP and INC in Delhi. They had hoped to unify the votes against BJP that used to get split between the two parties, especially the Muslim votes. However, the best this Alliance could do was bring down the BJP's vote share in Delhi from nearly 57% to 54.4% since the last election.

⁸⁴ Mr. Jain, Mr. Sisodia, and Mr. Kejriwal are currently lodged in Tihar Jail on corruption charges, with the former Deputy CM and CM being arrested in connection with the excise policy case.

The Delhi State convenor of AAP, Shri Gopal Rai admitted that alliance with the Congress helped AAP decrease its margin of loss compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha election. Their aim was to stop the BJP and they were successful to do so in Punjab and Chandigarh.

In protest against the AAP-Congress alliance and the selection of candidates, two former Congress MLAs, Shri Neeraj Basoya and Shri Naseeb Singh, resigned from the party following the footsteps of former Delhi Congress president Arvinder Singh Lovely. The AAP came to power in Delhi at the expense of the Congress. Therefore, the alliance created a lot of resentment among party workers, which ultimately led to a consolidation in favour of the BJP. The party workers were not too accommodative of one another and couldn't put up a united front on ground.⁸⁵ Also, the alleged scams against AAP leaders, the Swati Maliwal assault case and BJP's prominence in the media did impact the AAP's prospects and hurt the alliance.

Congress leader Shri Sandeep Dikshit, son of Smt. Shiela Dikshit, also commented that on three seats that the Congress lost, north-west Delhi, north-east Delhi, and Chandni Chowk, the AAP had a considerable presence of elected councillors in the MCD which indicates that they didn't do enough for Congress candidates on the ground. According to him, the AAP candidates on the remaining four seats were not political heavyweights.⁸⁶

Seat-wise Analysis

In North East Delhi, both the BJP and Congress fielded two famous Purvanchali faces – Shri Manoj Tiwari, a 2-time MP from the same seat, and Shri Kanhaiya Kumar, a former student leader. While Shri Manoj Tiwari who is already a popular face, took out several big rallies, Kanhaiya Kumar, who enjoys growing popularity among the migrant population, focused on smaller rallies. With strong backing from the BJP as an advantage, Shri Manoj Tiwari registered a hatrick win with a comfortable margin of around 2 lakh votes.

North West Delhi (SC) saw a fierce contest between BJP's Shri Yogender Chandolia (SC) and INC's Udit Raj (SC). In fact, Udit Raj had won this constituency on a BJP ticket in 2014 and he had left the party when he was overlooked for a mandate in 2019 LS elections. Granting him a ticket in 2024 led to a rebellion within the local Congress unit with Shri Arvinder Singh Lovely resigning from Congress and joining the BJP. Shri Yogender Chandolia, a former Mayor and well-known Dalit face of the party defeated Udit Raj securing the highest victory margin in Delhi of a little less than 3 lakh votes. While Udit Raj spoke of unfinished metro, flyover, and road development projects from his 2014 tenure, Shri

⁸⁵ *Why did AAP and Congress fail to stop BJP in Delhi? The answer lies in their history.* (n.d.). The Wire.

⁸⁶ Sharma, A. (2024, June 15). *AAP-Congress alliance in Delhi: a disintegrating partnership marked by accusations and governance challenges.* Frontline.

Yogender Chandoliya promised to provide metro access, a sports university, a robust infrastructure and education resources.

BJP's Smt. Bansuri Swaraj (General-Punjabi Khatri) defeated AAP's Somnath Bharti (General-Punjabi Khatri) by over 78 thousand votes in her electoral debut from the New Delhi constituency. Claiming to carry forward her mother, late Smt. Sushma Swaraj's legacy, Smt. Bansuri Swaraj saw a close contest with Shri Somnath Bharti. The BJP faced high anti-incumbency in the PC with Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi termed the "absentee MP". In face of this, Somnath Bharti's constituency-specific manifesto of a crime-free constituency and beautification of parks with dedicated spaces for elderly and children held promise for the constituency. However, a BJP bastion, the seat remained faithful while voting.

BJP clinched the Chandni Chowk seat as Shri Praveen Khandelwal (General-Baniya) defeated Shri Jai Prakash Aggarwal (General-Baniya) of Congress. The voters did show a clear mandate for the BJP candidate, but the victory margin was reduced compared to the previous election. While Aggarwal has represented the seat back in 1984, 1989 and 1996, Shri Praveen Khandelwal has strong association with the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT). Inflation, weak demand, competition from e-commerce, GST rationalisation, were few among the may crucial issues for the constituency.

Shri Ramvir Singh Bidhuri (OBC-Gujjar), the BJP candidate, emerged triumphant in the South Delhi constituency, clinching a resounding victory over his rival, Sahi Ram Pehalwan (OBC-Gujjar) from AAP. Both candidates belong to the Gujjar community as it forms the largest voter bloc in the seat. This seat has always been a BJP citadel, so much so former Prime Minister, Shri Manmohan Singh contested his only Lok Sabha election from here but lost to a BJP candidate.

The West Delhi constituency experienced a heated battle between BJP's Smt. Kamaljeet Sherawat (OBC-Jat) and AAP's Shri Mahabal Mishra (General-Brahmin). Mishra previously lost to BJP's Parvesh Verma, who also secured the seat in 2014. Ex-mayor of the erstwhile South MCD and having held various organisational posts in Delhi's BJP unit, Smt. Kamaljeet Sehrawat is acknowledged for "public connect". Coming from the Jat community, Smt. Kamaljeet Sehrawat drew the Jat votes who often play the role of kingmakers. Shri Mahabal Mishra, formerly from the Congress, was an MP from West Delhi for the Congress. He lost by a margin of around 2 lakh votes.

The INDIA Alliance, defending its performance, highlighted the fact that victory margins were narrow this time and that BJP's low vote share indicates that people wanted to give it a befitting reply. The people of Delhi stuck to the same pattern they follow since 2014, i.e., preferring BJP at the centre despite favouring AAP at the state level.

BJP - Party Organisation

Delhi first became the nucleus of Jana Sangh and subsequently BJP politics. The birth of Bhartiya Jana Sangh (BJS, precursor of BJP) founded by Dr. Shri Syama Prasad Mookerjee and RSS Sarsanghchalak, Shri Bal Raj Madhok took place at the Raghomal Kanya Madhyamik Vidyalaya in Delhi in 1951. Delhi was flooded with swarms of Punjabi refugees after the tragic partition of India for which they never forgave the Congress. They aided and actively supported the political operations of the BJS. In its strongest electoral performance in 1967 General Elections, the BJS secured 6 out of 7 seats in Delhi and went on to wrest control of the Metropolitan Council and Municipal corporation.⁸⁷

Shri Vijay Kumar Malhotra, former Chief Executive Councillor of Delhi, and an ex-MP, is perhaps the senior most politician from the Sangh stable, having contested his first election in the early 1950s with the patronage of the Jana Sangh. Among others who similarly fought on the Jana Sangh ticket was the former Vice President, the late Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat. Madhok, who in 1961 had emerged victorious from New Delhi in a byelection, led the charge and once again won from South Delhi.

After that there was no stopping the Jana Sangh. Shri Kidar Nath Sahani, Shri Balraj Khanna, Shri Madan Lal Khurana, Shri Lala Hansraj Gupta, Shri Shiv Narain Sarsoonnia, Shri Kalka Dass and Shri Charti Lal Goel all were among the stalwarts who dominated the political scenario. Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Shri Lal Krishna Advani, the latter was the Chairman of the Delhi Metropolitan Council, subsequently represented New Delhi in the Lok Sabha for the Bharatiya Janata Party. Besides them, Shri Krishan Lal Sharma and Smt. Sushma Swaraj were also MPs from Outer Delhi and South Delhi, respectively.

Table 26: Key leaders and Office bearers of BJP Delhi

Name	Position	Caste
Shri Virendra Sachdeva	State President	Punjabi Khatri
Shri Kapil Mishra	State Vice President	Brahmin
Shri Dinesh Pratap Singh	State Vice President	Rajput
Shri Gajendra Yadav	State Vice President	Yadav (OBC)
Shri Raj Kumar Bhatia	State Vice President	Punjabi Khatri

⁸⁷ Vohra, P. (2018, October 20). *Jana Sangh-BJP saga started in Delhi - The Sunday Guardian Live*. The Sunday Guardian Live.

Smt. Lata Gupta	State Vice President	Baniya
Smt. Yogita Singh	State Vice President	Rajput
Smt. Sunita Kangra	State Vice President	Jat
Shri Vinay Rawat	State Vice President	Rajput
Shri Vishnu Mittal	General Secretary	Baniya
Smt. Kamaljeet Sehrawat	General Secretary (also, MP from West Delhi)	Jat
Shri Yogender Chandolia	General Secretary (also, MP from North West Delhi)	SC
Shri Pavan Rana	General Secretary (Org.)	Rajput
Shri Harsh Malhotra	General Secretary (also, MP from East Delhi)	Punjabi Khatri
Smt. Bansuri Swaraj	Secretary (also, MP from New Delhi)	Punjabi Khatri
Shri Satish Garg	State Treasurer	Baniya
Shri Omprakash Dhankar	State Prabhari (Incharge)	Jat
Smt. Alka Gurjar	State Prabhari (Co-incharge)	Gujjar
Shri Ramvir Singh Bidhuri	Leader of Opposition	Gujjar
Shri Om Prakash Sharma	Deputy Leader of Opposition	Brahmin

Morchas

BJP, Delhi has a total of seven morchas representing different interest groups in the Union Territory. All these wings had been integrated in promoting the outreach campaign of ‘Abki Baar, 400 Paar’ across the state for the 2024 Elections. Under the broader programme, all Morchas began their respective voter outreach programmes. Various state-specific issues of the AAP government under Kejriwal were picked up in addition to promoting the works of Modi government at the centre.⁸⁸ Table 23 summarises the issues being brought to fore by the various morchas:

⁸⁸ Tnn. (2024, April 30). Lok Sabha election: BJP sets up over 40 teams to boost voter outreach. *The Times of India*.

Table 27: Delhi BJP Morchas and their President

Morcha	President	Activities/Issues raised
Mahila Morcha	Smt. Richa Pandey Mishra	Focused on popularising the Modi government schemes like Lakhpati Didi, and the passage of historic Women’s Reservation Bill; and protested against the Congress manifesto warning women voters against their ‘mangalsutras being stolen’ ⁸⁹
Yuva Morcha	Shri Sagar Tyagi	Unveiled a new website titled ‘Modi Transforming Bharat’ to highlight his work in the last decade; held ‘yuva sammelans’ alongside door-to-door campaigning
SC Morcha	Shri Mohan Lal Gihara	Raised voice against the opposition’s claims of BJP changing the Constitution, if elected; and organised ‘anusuchit jati morcha sammelans’
OBC Morcha	Shri Sunil Yadav	Protested against Rahul Gandhi’s statement of Muslims having the first right on country’s resources and Congress’ agenda of giving reservations to Muslims from OBC’s share
Purvanchal Morcha	Shri Neeraj Tiwari	Highlighted the welfare works of the Modi-led Union government in Delhi; and the non-implementation of its schemes like Ayushman Bharat and Awas Yojana by the Delhi government in the UT
Kisan Morcha	Shri Vinod Sehrawat	Popularised Modi government’s schemes for farmers, fishermen, etc. through parikrama rallies; held kisan choupals to get feedback to be included in the poll manifesto
Minority Morcha	Shri Anish Abbasi	Busted allegations by INDI Alliance that BJP would change the constitution to deprive the minorities of their rights; and organised kaum choupals for voter outreach

⁸⁹ Statesman News Service & Statesman News Service. (2024, April 24). *Delhi BJP women wing protests against Congress manifesto*. The Statesman.

Issues faced by BJP's Delhi Unit

Despite having swept all seven parliamentary seats in 2014, 2019 and 2024 elections, the BJP hasn't been able to form a government in Delhi for the past 25 years. One of the reasons is the lack of a strong CM-face. The party has not been able to reach a consensus on a single candidate whom they can trust to lead the election campaign. This lack of agreement is due to the presence of competing factions within the party, each backing different potential candidates, leading to uncertainty and indecision.

The party has seen big leaders in its fold like Shri Madan Lal Khurana, Shri V. K. Malhotra, Shri Saheb Singh Verma among a slew of others but the new generation of leaders have failed to replace them. It lost the 2015 and 2020 election for various reasons including – infighting issues in the party with the sudden induction of Smt. Kiran Bedi as the CM candidate; lost touch with the ground realities and changing demographic and political needs; heavy reliance on Modi's charisma; leaders with popular faces but not full-time political leaders; etc. There had been an organisational rejig, for instance making Shri Manoj Tiwari the Delhi BJP chief, but the results were yet to materialise.

Moreover, the strong leadership of Shri Arvind Kejriwal as a promising CM-face and populist schemes by AAP have tilted the scales in their favour. Even in the 2024 election, despite winning all seven seats, it was not all rosy for the BJP. Its vote share dropped by 2.6% and the victory margins reduced considerably.⁹⁰ However, it is being observed that if the AAP and INC hadn't formed an alliance to prevent splitting of votes, the BJP's victory margins would have been quite higher.

What worked for the BJP in 2024?

EC data shows that in the last 35 years, the BJP has failed to win a majority of the Lok Sabha seats in Delhi only twice – 2004 and 2009, losing overall at the national level.⁹¹

One of the major factors attributed to the BJP's victory is the 'Modi factor'. It may not have been as strong in neighbouring states of Haryana, UP and Rajasthan but the NCR voted in line with Delhi. It is a trend that a significant population in Delhi seem to go with the BJP in the general elections, but vote for the AAP in the assembly polls. It maybe because neither is the AAP seen as an equity holder in national politics nor is Shri Arvind Kejriwal seen as a PM face. Similarly, the BJP doesn't have a strong CM face and the Modi charm doesn't work in the state-level politics. Moreover, the BJP replaced six of its sitting MPs from Delhi to fight anti-incumbency highlighted by the party's internal surveys. This seemed to have worked well for the party.

⁹⁰ Mathur, A. (2024, June 7). BJP swept polls in Delhi, but not all rosy for party: What verdict hides. *The Times of India*.

⁹¹ Sriram, V., & Sriram, V. (2024, June 11). BJP's 7-0 sweep: Why didn't Delhi go the Uttar Pradesh and Haryana way? *The Quint*.

In the preparatory phase, the BJP state unit in Delhi stepped up its campaign strategy. The party organised constituency-level workers' conferences in all seven parliamentary constituencies. Attended by senior leaders, these meetings asked the party workers to connect with Resident Welfare Associations, market trader associations, religious organisations and women groups, etc., to spread the party's goals. The party had planned a two-level campaign strategy – to spread the developmental works of Modi government at Centre and to garner public opinion against the misrule of Kejriwal's government.

What next for the BJP in Delhi?

With a little over six months left for the next Delhi polls, there is still no clarity over BJP's CM face. However, under Shri Virendra Sachdeva as the state president since March 2023, party leaders claim, past issues like lack of coordination among workers and leaders have been resolved now. However, there are talks of probable discussions in the party of Smt. Bansuri Swaraj as the potential CM candidate. She has received a clear mandate in the Lok Sabha elections and is considered worthy of replacing the iconic image of Smt. Sheila Dikshit as the new woman CM. Moreover, the liquor scam provides the BJP an opportunity to strengthen its stronghold among women besides calling out the 'corrupt' AAP. The issue of now-scrapped excise policy raised many complaints from among the women voters terrified of domestic abuse and other growing crimes in their localities. This was used by the BJP to its benefit and Smt. Bansuri Swaraj, who is quite vocal about this issue can play a crucial role in consolidating the women votes if projected as the new CM-face. Hopefully, the BJP learns its lesson and doesn't rely on the same strategy it had used in the last election.

BJP has geared up for the upcoming polls. Being out of power for 25 years, BJP leaders have asked their workers to promote central government's schemes and welfare projects besides highlighting the "failures" of the AAP-led Delhi dispensation. While this maybe a good plan, BJP will have to up its game and project a new CM-face soon. People of Delhi have reposed their faith in the BJP by giving them a clear mandate in the general elections. Considering this and challenges faced by AAP government, BJP has a good opportunity to present itself as a better alternative at the state level.

Congress - Party Organisation

The Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC) is the state wing of INC in Delhi, responsible for organising and coordinating the party's activities and campaigns within the region, as well as selecting candidates for local, state, and national elections in NCT of Delhi.

Delhi has seen the decline of INC after its lost power in the UT in 2013 and at the Centre in 2014. There was some hope of revival after an alliance with the AAP but the 2024 results shut it down. Congress has had a golden era in Delhi pre-2013 with three consecutive terms of Smt. Sheila Dikshit as the Chief Minister.

The Congress Delhi unit has been in a political wilderness having caught up in infighting issues and warring factions on quite a few instances. Three decades back, then Congress President Smt. Sonia Gandhi sprung a surprise on fighting party workers in Delhi by bringing in Smt. Sheila Dikshit, a rank outsider, as the party chief when DPCC was witnessing a clash between the Shri H. K. L. Bhagat and Shri Jagdish Tytler groups. Most recently, the Congress leadership under Shri Mallikarjun Kharge felt a shakeup when DPCC chief, Shri Arvinder Singh Lovely quit the party and joined the BJP less than a month before the 2024 elections. The AAP-Congress alliance seemed a win-win for both sides, but it sidelined some leaders in the Congress which led to some (including Lovely) leaving the party. Moreover, Shri Arvinder Singh Lovely alleged that all unanimous decisions taken by senior Delhi Congress functionaries had been unilaterally vetoed by the AICC city in-charge, Shri Deepak Babaria without intimating the state unit, including the decisions on the Lok Sabha candidates.

Shri Devender Yadav was appointed 2 days later as the interim President of DPCC. There were rumours that the party would make Shri Kanhaiya Kumar its President, seemingly part of a broader strategy to resurrect the party. Shri Kanhaiya Kumar seems to be the Congress's wild card, reminiscent of the Sheila Dikshit moment in the 90s. Sources say that the Congress leadership is of the view that despite Shri Kanhaiya Kumar's loss in the Lok Sabha elections, the party would consider a larger role for him in the Delhi unit post elections.⁹²

The Delhi Congress is set for a major reshuffle as the party aims to reclaim its lost voter base in the national capital, which is slated for Assembly elections in 2025. The party thinktank is brainstorming on probable candidates for Delhi Congress President post. The party has primarily two categories from which a candidate can be chosen: Purvanchali and Punjabi communities. Other community leaders are also on the radar and the hunt for a new firebrand president is on.

⁹² Kunal, K. (2024, April 16). Kanhaiya Kumar the new Sheila Dikshit for Delhi Congress? Decoding K-factor. *India Today*.

The Delhi unit of Congress has undertaken various organisational drives to revamp its structure in the national capital. In 2015, when INC was neither in the Government nor in the Opposition of the Delhi Assembly, it took it as an opportunity to rebuild its organisational structure from the ground level. The traditional block and district organisation system of the party in Delhi was replaced by a ‘chapter system’, organised on the basis of pertinent issues. Some chapters included ‘Safaimazdoor Congress’ and ‘the Street Vendors Congress’. The party did away with the block-level organisation system to appoint senior leaders, including former ministers, as ‘observers’ throughout the capital.⁹³

Again in 2023, the DPCC kicked off a massive overhaul, appointing one block president and two mandal presidents in each block. Every assembly constituency has at least three blocks, making it a nine-member team in every assembly segment across 70 constituencies. This was in anticipation of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.⁹⁴

Most recently, post 2024 elections, in another organisational rejig, the DPCC initiated restructuring the party’s cadre by merging its ward-level committees with block committees. It has also introduced ‘Mandalams’, an elementary unit of management – a system similar to that of its arch rival, the BJP. 250 blocs have been carved out with each bloc have 2 or more positions of Mandalam.⁹⁵

Table 28: Key leaders and Office bearers of Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee

Name	Position	Caste
Shri Devender Yadav	State President (Interim)	Yadav (OBC)
Shri Mudit Aggarwal	State Vice President	Baniya
Smt. Shivani Chopra	State Vice President	Punjabi Khatri
Shri Ali Mehdi	State Vice President	Muslim
Shri Jai Kishan	State Vice President	
Shri Ashutosh Kake	General Secretary	
Shri Sandeep Goswami	State Treasurer	Brahmin
Shri J P Panwar	State Coordinator	Rajput

⁹³ Iqbal, N. (2015, September 11). *With eye on ground level politics, Delhi Congress heads for major revamp*. The Indian Express.

⁹⁴ *Taking no chances, Congress begins organisational Rejig across Delhi*. The Economic Times. (n.d.-b).

⁹⁵ Srivastava, A. (n.d.-a). *Congress starts drive in Delhi to revamp local committees*. The New Indian Express.

Shri Anil Bhardwaj	State Spokesperson	Brahmin
Shri Sunil Kumar	Chairman, Legal Department	Punjabi Khatri

Wings

Table 29: Delhi Congress Wings and their President

Wing	President
Delhi Pradesh Mahila Congress	Smt. Pushpa Singh
Delhi Pradesh Youth Congress	Shri Rannvijay Singh Lochav; Shri Shubham Sharma (Working President)
NSUI Delhi (Student wing)	Shri Kunal Sehrawat
DPCC SC Department	Shri Sanjay Neeraj (Chairman)
DPCC OBC Department	Shri Rajeev Verma (Chairman)
DPCC Minority Department	Shri Abdul Qureshi (Chairman)
Kisan and Khet Mazdoor Congress Delhi	Shri Rajbir Solanki
INTUC Delhi (Trade Union)	Shri Chaudhary Zile Singh Gujjar

Coming to the party's plans for the future elections, its primary focus is on consolidation of Musli-Dalit vote in the City. After analysing the results of the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress has decided to step up its organisational game in around two dozen Assembly Constituencies, designated as 'focus seats' – which the party either lost by slim margins or where it obtained a significant chunk of the SC/ST/OBC vote apart from that of minority communities.

Not surprisingly, the Congress has decided to go solo in the Vidhan Sabha elections. This decision comes after considering the increased vote share of the party in LS polls. Not long after the failed attempt at winning the PCs in Delhi, Congress launched the 'Matka Phod' protest against the AAP-led Delhi government for mishandling of the water crisis and waterlogging issues in the city.

Congress aspires to regain ground lost to AAP, especially as Shri Arvind Kejriwal's popularity is likely to wane after his arrest in an excise policy case. The real test for Congress wasn't the 2024 General Elections rather it lies in the 2025 Assembly elections.

AAP-Party Organisation

Founded in 2012, the Aam Aadmi Party first became a state party in Delhi in 2013. Gradually expanding to Punjab, Gujarat and Goa as a state party and consolidating its presence in various other states, the ECI officially granted it the status of a National Party. In its debut in the 2013 Delhi Assembly elections, it emerged as the second largest party forming government with the external support of INC. However, with differences between the two parties showing up, Shri Arvind Kejriwal resigned as the CM after a 49-day stint on not being able to pass the Jan Lokpal Bill.

Following the President's Rule, in 2015, fresh elections to the Vidhan Sabha took place and AAP secured a resounding victory. Ever since, it has been ruling Delhi with an overwhelming public mandate in every VS election despite facing massive losses in the LS polls.

The organisational structure of AAP contains 5 levels – primary, block, district, state and national. At the State level, there are three major bodies that play an important role including the 'State Council' which elects from among its members the 'State Executive' which consults the 'State Political Affairs Committee' before taking any decisions.

After badly losing the civil polls in April 2017, Shri Gopal Rai, then Labour Minister in Delhi government was appointed the Delhi convener of the AAP replacing Shri Dilip Pandey. Soon after, in May, Shri Gopal Rai announced an overhaul of its organisational structure by appointing a 'mandal adhyaksh' for each polling station in Delhi. The plan was to involve every party member be it the CM, assembly members, municipal councillors or office-bearers to take charge of the organisational building in their own polling booths, so that AAP's performance in the government would reach to every street and locality.⁹⁶ There is a routine exercise of building the organisation that is undertaken after every election. But the AAP structure in Delhi had new appointments prior to the 2024 elections too. It appointed presidents (Vidhansabha Adhyaksh) and organisation secretaries (Vidhansabha Sangathan Mantri) for each of the 7 PCs.

Table 30: Key leaders and Office bearers of AAP Delhi

Name	Position	Caste
Shri Sandeep Pathak	National General Secretary (Organisation)	Brahmin
Shri Gopal Rai	State President and Convener	Brahmin
Shri Dilip Pandey	State Vice-President	Brahmin

⁹⁶ Agencies. (2017, May 19). *AAP to alter organisational structure in Delhi*. MillenniumPost.

Shri Jarnail Singh	State Vice-President	Sikh
Shri Gulab Singh Yadav	State Vice-President	Yadav (OBC)
Shri Rituraj Jha	State Vice-President	Brahmin
Shri Rajesh Gupta	State Vice-President	Baniya
Shri Kuldeep Kumar	State Vice-President	Punjabi Khatri
Shri Jitendra Tomar	State Vice-President	Rajput
Shri Yashpal Singh	State Secretary (Organisation)	
Shri Mohammad Imran	State Secretary (Organisation)	Muslim
Shri Deepanshu Shrivastav	Joint Secretary (Organisation)	Brahmin
Shri Anil Patodia	Joint Secretary (Main Wing)	Baniya

Election data as well as the organisational structure of AAP shows its transformation from an anti-system movement into a conventional political party. In recent years, AAP has emerged as a party that is officially caste agnostic. It claims to mobilise and to work in favour of Dilliwalas irrespective of their caste affiliation. However, the eruption of AAP has not fundamentally changed the social composition of the Delhi assembly. The trends clearly indicate a lot of continuity in this regard. Moreover, the share of representation of Brahmins in party as well as candidates fielded by the AAP is significantly higher than that of BJP and Congress.

Wings

AAP Delhi has various wings other than its main wing. These wings are – Doctor, Grameen (Rural), Women, Students, Youth, Minority, SC/ST, Trade, Purvanchal, Sports, and Legal. In 2023, a new Transgender wing was created by AAP under its Delhi unit which is a first of its kind by any political party.⁹⁷

Table 29: Delhi AAP Wings and their President

Wing	President
Youth Wing	Shri Pankaj Gupta

⁹⁷ Rajput, A. (2023, August 3). AAP creates transgender wing in Delhi unit. *The Times of India*.

Wing	President
Women Wing	Smt. Sarika Chaudhary
Purvanchal Wing	Shri Akhilesh Trpathi
Trade Wing	Shri Mohinder Goyal
Sports Wing	Shri Dinesh Bhardwaj
Legal Wing	Shri Sanjeev Nasiar
Transgender Wing	Shri Bobby Kinnar
Minority Wing	Shri Haji Yunus
SC/ST Wing	Shri Vishesh Ravi
Student Wing	Shri Sumit Yadav
Doctor Wing	
Grameen Wing	
Residents Welfare Association Wing	Shri Raja Chhabra

The General election in 2024 has proved again that AAP is still not considered a national player. Its failing is that even 12 years since inception, it has not presented a vision document for the country; nobody knows what the AAP's economic, foreign and defence policies are. Moreover, some still say that Shri Arvind Kejriwal has failed to strengthen AAP's organisational structure and it has largely remained a one-leader party. In the recent too, AAP fought a highly localised campaign, making Shri Arvind Kejriwal's arrest and performance of Delhi government its central poll plank. It gave the slogan, 'Jail ka jawab vote se', as the theme to get the sympathy vote against the allegedly wrongful arrest by central agencies. However, the case of physically manhandling AAP parliamentarian Smt. Swati Maliwal by Shri Shri Kejriwal's trusted aide Shri Bibhav Kumar dented the public sympathy.⁹⁸

However, with the CM and two other senior leaders being in jail, AAP is facing an existential crisis ahead of the very crucial 2025 Delhi Vidhan Sabha polls. Not just that, the threat of Centre imposing the President's Rule in Delhi continues to loom over the UT if Shri Arvind Kejriwal doesn't step down

⁹⁸ Ujwal Jalali, & Ujwal Jalali. (2024, May 19). *Kejriwal's PA Bibhav Kumar sent to five-day police custody after arrest in Maliwal assault case*. The New Indian Express.

as the CM, causing governance in the city to suffer. There is a struggle among the probable contenders – Smt. Sunita Kejriwal, Smt. Atishi Marlena Singh, Shri Saurabh Bhardwaj and Shri Bhagwant Mann – in the race of being Shri Arvind Kejriwal’s successor. Besides, with its vulnerabilities exposed, the party faces the huge challenge of keeping its flock together. Some senior leaders from both, the Congress and the BJP have claimed in private that many legislators and municipal councillors of AAP are willing to jump ship.

Nevertheless, refocusing now on the upcoming Assembly polls, AAP has started galvanising its MLAs and volunteers to enhance public outreach and undertake development works that were halted due to the Model Code of Conduct. The party will have to rely on its second line of leadership to deal with challenges of organisation and strategising for polls with its leader and CM, Arvind Kejriwal in jail. The 2024 results suggest that the AAP would need to recalibrate its strategy in the run-up to the Delhi polls, perhaps by focusing on delivering better infrastructural facilities.

Summing Up

This primer has reviewed the state politics in Delhi keeping in view the upcoming Legislative Assembly Elections in 2025. Broad trends which can be politically significant have been highlighted by summarising the political and electoral history of the NCT of Delhi. Congress experienced its golden era in Delhi for quite some time before the AAP entered the electoral scene forming government thrice. BJP has been sweeping in the lok sabha elections for the last 3 terms but hasn't had any luck at the state level.

Delhi has a large migrant population from neighbouring states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Uttarakhand. Therefore, along with caste, the linguistic communities from these states play a decisive role in the politics of Delhi. The upper castes majorly vote for the BJP while Muslims and Dalits are Congress loyalists. AAP has been able to enter and capture the vote bank of both, BJP and Congress to some extent. All parties have tried to satisfy various caste identities by choosing office-bearers from different castes in their organisational structure. Apart from these social bifurcations, class divisions have a considerate influence on voting patterns in Delhi.

The elections to the MCD as well as the DSGMC are a big deal in Delhi and are thus crucial to understand the political and caste equations in the UT. The trends and technicalities of the elections to these bodies have also been discussed briefly in the primer.

Finally with the 2025 election just months away, the state units of all the three major parties have started their preparations in full swing. Congress is hopeful of its comeback since the Dikshit-era given its increased vote share in the 2024 general elections. The BJP is trying to prove its competency at the state level after getting a massive mandate for the Lok Sabha. Whereas AAP, which has had 3 terms in power seems to be in a difficult position with its National convener and CM in jail along with 2 senior leaders. Lately, it has been facing criticisms in various issues may it be the Swati Maliwal case or the mismanagement during monsoons causing casualties of UPSC aspirants. Thus, 2025 Vidhan Sabha elections would be the true test for the performance of all the parties in the National Capital.