

Akola Lok Sabha Election -1998 An Over View

By

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The 1998 Lok Sabha elections were the mid-term elections held only 17 months later. In the 1996 elections, no party could get a majority in the Lok Sabha. Out of 537 members, 163 members were elected from Bharatiya Janata Party. As the largest party, BJP first formed its government under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. But he resigned as there was no vote to prove the majority in the House. After that, various parties came together to form the third alliance and formed the government with the support of the Congress. In the period of 17 months, India H. D. Deve Gowda (1 June 1996 - 20 April 1997) and Indra Kumar Gujral (21 April 1997 - 18 March 1998) saw two Prime Ministers.

In the Jain Commission report on the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, some members of the DMK were blamed and Gujral of the same party was elected to the cabinet, the Congress demanded his removal from the cabinet and threatened to withdraw his support if this demand was not met. The Third Front decided to resign from the government rather than succumb to repeated pressure from the Congress, and the 11th Lok Sabha was dissolved on 4 December 1997. And the election program was announced.

Meanwhile, the condition of Congress had become miserable. Narasimha Rao was sidelined for influencing the 1996 elections. He was replaced by Seeram Kesari Arjun Singh, N.D. Tiwari. Leaders like Madhavrao Shinde were brought back to the Congress. Arjun Singh and Sharad Pawar wooed Sonia Gandhi and made her lead the party.

The eyes of the leaders of the Third Front were opened as soon as they lost power. Bharatiya Janata Party was taking its side there.

At the time of this election, it had been three years since the BJP-Sena coalition came to power in Maharashtra. The people of Maharashtra were disillusioned with the coalition government's policy of bailing on promises and doing nothing.

Daoud's Enron promises proved hollow. The promise of job and house could not be fulfilled.

BJP had won the 1995 and 1966 elections on the issue of independent Vidarbha and the government forgot this key issue after coming to power. In Vidarbha there were two cases of unnatural outbreaks. In that, the coalition government fell short in providing relief and financial assistance to the farmers.

During the election Sharad Pawar took an important decision despite going against Congress elites. He formed an alliance of the Congress with the United Republican Party. Adv. Prakash Ambedkar, Prof. Jogendra Kawade, Ramdas Athawale, Res. Gavai was promised four seats in the state and elected.

Bharatiya Janata Party this time gave ticket to Pandurang Phundkar without changing the candidates. Fundkar won all the three elections of 1989, 1991 and 1996. However, in the

1996 elections, the voter turnout was reduced. Adv. as candidate of Congress-Bharip alliance. Prakash Ambedkar was nominated for Akola Lok Sabha. At this time, because Ambedkar was supported by the Congress and also because the Bahujan Mahasanghan was with him, Ambedkar's burden was heavy.

Prakash Tathod from Janata Dal, Ram Prabhu Sonone from BSP, A.Bh. Shaligram Joshi, Arun Gawli from Hindu Mahasabha. Bh. Anil Gard from the Sena, while Sahityatik, poet Vitthal Wagh, Ramesh Hiralkar and Bhai Rajinikanth stood for the Lok Sabha contest from Akola as independent candidates. As a matter of fact, 14 candidates withdrew their nominations, leaving 9 candidates in the fray.

His traditional rival Balasaheb Ambedkar stood in the field against the sitting BJP MP Pandurang Fundkar. In this election, it was not a three-way fight but a straight fight. Along with the traditional votes of the Congress, the Dalit-Muslim-Bahujan votes were in Ambedkar's pard, so the election picture was made. In the previous election, Ambedkar had to accept defeat by a small margin of 9053 votes.

BJP campaigners and workers were chanting slogans like "Bharatiya Janata Party Zindabad" "BJP-Sena Alliance Victory", "Ab Ki Bari Atal Bihari Bari Bari Atal Bihari". Intellectuals were doing the work of throwing stones of salt in this alliance.

Dalit people vote for Congress candidates without hesitation. But when the golden voter of Congress does not vote for the candidate of the Republican party, his caste pride comes to the fore. Therefore, this alliance will only benefit the Congress, not the Republican Party. But the leaders of Congress and Bharip Bamsam went around and clearly said that there is no need for anyone to have doubts. Bharip activists were chanting slogans like "Bala Saheb Tum Aage Badho , Hum Tumhare Saath Hai" "Bahujan Saare Ek Hoo Satta Aaypa Hathe Gheu" "Congress-Republican Alliance Victory".

On February 22, 1998, out of 10,20,511 voters, 7,33,223 voters performed their duty of voting. The voting percentage increased to 65.48 from the previous 60.22. 9562 votes were declared invalid out of the polls held. Counting of votes took place on 02 March 1998 and the results were announced on 03 March 1998 and finally Balasaheb Ambedkar won from the Akola Lok Sabha constituency. Balasaheb got 3,66,427 votes. He by a margin of 32,782 Defeated traditional rival Pandurang Fundkar. Since 1984, Balasaheb had entered the politics of Akola. He was elected as a member of the Rajya Sabha during the period 1990-96. But for the first time in 1998, with the help of Sharad Pawar and the Congress, he got into the Lok Sabha.

BJP's Pandurang Fundkar got 3,33,345 votes. 7 candidates could not save their deposit amount. Prakash Tathod at the third position, Anil Gard at the fourth position and Vitthal Wagh at the fifth position had to be satisfied. The 1998 elections taught the Akola Lok Sabha constituency an important lesson. If there is an alliance between Congress and Bharip, it becomes difficult for BJP to achieve success, and if the fight is three-way, then BJP is definitely successful.

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Sr.No.	Name of Candidate	Political Party	Vote Count	Percentage
1	Prakash Yashwantrao Ambedkar	Bharip	3,66,427	50.64%
2	Pandurang Phundkar	BJP	3,33,645	46.11%
3	Prakash Tathod	JD	12335	1.70%
4	Anil Gard	A.B. Sena	4057	0.56%
5	Vitthal Vagh	Independent	2661	0.37%
6	Shalihgram Joshi	Hindu Mahasabha	2005	0.28%
7	Ram Prabhu Sonone	BSP	1334	0.18%
8	Ramesh Hiralkar	Independent	783	0.11%
9	Bhai Rajniknath	Independent	365	0.05%

Reference

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