

## INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS: THE POLITICAL DECLINE

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*Over the years, the Indian National Congress appears to be on a downward trend in terms of its electoral dominance and has even been ousted several times from majority control of seats in the Indian Parliament and in many states as well. From being the single dominant political party in India to its wretched performance in the recently held assembly elections in different states of India, the Indian National Congress has been on a steady downhill journey. This article looks at its trajectory post-independence and especially in the aftermath of the Lok-Sabha Election-2014.*

**Key Words:** *India, Congress, Decline, Politics, Election.*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The 2014 Lok Sabha election managed the Indian National Congress a constituent punch that thumped the breeze out of its sails. It likewise hurled a pioneer in Narendra Modi that was reminiscent of Indira Gandhi with an overwhelming picture and that brought about a structural move of political balance in Delhi from the middle of the Centre ideological sticking of the Congress to the conservative brand of governmental issues of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) which revealed another political talk promising to introduce another India free from the Indian National Congress.

After the loksabha elections-2014, journalistic and academic narratives concentrating on the decline of the Indian National Congress party in the Indian's political ground abounded and red flags were raised within the party circles to stop its terminal downslide and save it from being marginalized. The party (Congress) went into a huddle but internal dissensions and lack of idealistic tactics botched to revive its electoral fortunes. The Congress party lost the state elections held in 2015-2016 in different states of India in quick succession and conceded the

remaining political space to the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) which was on a roll. The recent assembly elections held in Uttar Pradesh (UP), Punjab, Goa, Manipur and Uttarakhand in March were a kind of a referendum on demonetization undertaken by Narendra Modi and a mid-term appraisal of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) government. The matter of demonetization created a sharp political divide and provided the Congress Party a much needed chance not only in stopping the saran juggernaut but also in reversing its losing streak and making a political U-turn.

The voters of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Uttarakhand gave the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) one of the prime state election mandates in free India. The Indian National Congress registered a comfort win in Punjab and emerged as the largest party in Manipur and Goa (in terms of seats, but lagged behind the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) in terms of popular votes) but still lost the opportunity to form the government in the smaller states. This was largely due to deprived negotiations by the party's state interlocutors and the flip flop by its national leadership. The declining wheel turned a full circle and the Congress Party is in power now in only in some states like Punjab, Karnataka, Mizoram, Meghalaya, etc. on its own.

Then again, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has extended its political reach and guidelines in 17 states either without anyone else or in cooperation with different gatherings. The discretionary guide of nation has turned nearly saffron flagging the ascent of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) as a principle player in the Indian governmental issues. The discretionary decrease of the Congress Party after the elections in the above mentioned states has by and by begun the open deliberation in the general population area over its approaching decay with some finished excited political eyewitnesses notwithstanding composing tribute and penning compositions.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

The specific objectives of this research paper are as under:-

- To analyze the performance of Indian National Congress in Past Lok Sabha Elections in India.
- To study the decline of the Indian National Congress in Indian Politics.
- To evaluate the causes responsible for the defeat of Indian National Congress in state assembly elections as well as in Lok Sabha Election-2014.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

The present research paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyze the past performance and decline of Indian National Congress in Indian Politics. The data used for this paper is only from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

It along these lines ends up relevant to dive into the declining fame chart of the Congress Party and learn the most conceivable reasons that could clarify the present cutting back of constituent help for the gathering from a vantage point. The political voyage of the gathering (Congress) can be partitioned into three time spans. It started its first innings socially as the Indian National Congress (INC) after autonomy and saw a resurrection in 1971 when Indira Gandhi broke free from the shackles of effective pioneers who had known her dad and framed her own gathering. The Congress (Indira) proceeded after her passing in 1984 under the administration of her child Rajiv Gandhi until his death in 1991. There was a political interregnum in the vicinity of 1992 and 1997 when the gathering was not driven by any individual from the Nehru-Gandhi family. The assuming control of the reins of the Congress by Sonia Gandhi in 1998 denoted the 3.0 variant of the gathering. She impelled it back to control at the Centre in 2004 and ruled for a long time (in collusion with different gatherings) previously taking an appointive bow in 2014.

## **INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS 1952-1968:**

From the first loksabha election in 1952 when Jawaharlal Nehru drove it to an avalanche triumph (it won 364 of the 401 seats), the Indian National Congress won in most of the accompanying state decisions and prepared for a Nehruvian time of single gathering strength. Political researcher Rajni Kothari in his book Politics in India defines a one-party overwhelming framework as, "an aggressive gathering framework however one in which the contending parts assume divergent parts and one which comprises of, gatherings of weight and gatherings of agreement". The gatherings of weight work inside the edge of weight which contains resistance parties. The gatherings of accord are those which are a piece of the decision agreement. The framework relies upon the affectability of the edge of weight, where the gatherings of weight work, guarantee reasonable checks and adjust on the decision accord and guarantee the responsibility of the gatherings of agreement. He identified the Congress party as the fundamental accord and along these lines the predominant party with a commitment towards country working through which the Indian political framework worked after autonomy with consecutive appointive triumphs in the 1952, 1957 and 1962 Lok Sabha elections.

The Congress party framework amid this period worked in a duplicate book style with authority at national, state and neighborhood level picked by those individuals from the authoritative bodies directing their full help. There was a cover between the official and authoritative wings however their work profile was perfectly outlined for legitimate working joined in reason and full regard for protected appropriateness. The Congress government under Nehru was the need of great importance for an India that had been completely fouled up by British mismanagement, yet its general predominance sowed seeds of its self-debilitating which wound up obvious over the long haul. Kothari expressed that "as it were, the Nehru time frame was an outstanding period in India's history, one that was so essential, yet not so ordinary, but rather it had its effect on the working of the gathering framework. While the congress picked up in quality, Nehru in another way debilitated the gathering by moving force in his own hands and through going about as though no one but he could hold the nation together".

The loksabha elections held in 1967 under the authority of Indira Gandhi after the passing of Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri demonstrated Kothari's contention all right Congress party blockaded by inside disputes and factionalism not just lost in more than 100 parliamentary seats yet additionally shed four rate purposes of mainstream votes. It lost eight state decisions from there on which truly debilitated its predominance, however it kept on outstanding "the prevalent political power in the nation". Nehru's solid initiative made uncertainties among the capable pioneers in his bureau and prompted the arrangement of syndicates which surfaced after his demise for catching force and hurting the picture of Congress party known for its conclusive authority and flag bearers of internal gathering vote based system.

The lack of consensus in choosing a successor led to infighting in the party which was openly aired in the public domain. This could be flagged as the first sign of the moral decline of the Congress party and the dilution of its political legacy leading to gradual loss of the enormous mass support it commanded among the people during the Nehruvian period.

**Lok Sabha Elections in India and Performance of Indian National Congress:**

Year	Total Seats	Seats Won	Vote Share (in Percent)	Gain/Loss (Vote Share)
1952	401	364	45.0	-
1957	403	371	47.8	+2.8
1962	494	361	44.7	-3.1
1967	520	283	40.8	-3.9

(Source: Election Commission of India- <https://www.eci.nic.in>)

## INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (INDIRA-RAJIV GANDHI) 1969-1991:

After the demise of the occupant Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri the administration issue inside the gathering was dealt with the height of Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister of India in 1966. Nonetheless, the internecine fight among the two warring groups proceeded. The infighting finally brought about a vertical split inside the gathering, with the greater part running with Indira Gandhi and the development of the Congress (I). The loksabha election 1971 was challenged by Indira Gandhi on the trademark "GaribiHatao" and her master poor posing made a discretionary wave to support her with the gathering including 69 more parliamentary seats and expanding its vote share skillet India by 3%. The decisions dealt with the administration issue unequivocally with Indira Gandhi procuring an overwhelming picture compared with the Indian goddess Durga and beginning another section that ended up known as the identity religion in Indian governmental issues.

The period that followed destroyed the second tier leadership in the party and voice for constructive criticisms as she replaced state leaders with their own standing with people who had no political base and were completely loyal to her. The party's organisational structure was changed from the bottom upwards and weakened its moorings with the common people, shutting the direct line of communication and feedback from the electorate. The isolation of Indira Gandhi was completed in 1972 as the party lost several by-elections including one seat which it had not lost since the first general elections and encountered a host of internal problems like high inflation due to the war with Pakistan, drought in some parts of the country and the 1973 oil crisis.

Indira Gandhi's falling notoriety evaluations joined with the decision of the Allahabad High Court on constituent acts of neglect prompted the assertion of crisis in 1975. She skirted the parliament and ruled the nation by incorporating complete power in her grasp with draconian announcements and presidential proclamations trampling sacred bodies and popularity based privileges of the general population. The additional protected forces appropriated by her child Sanjay Gandhi by passing the gathering authority and the overabundances conferred by him not just wasted the famous command presented on the Congress Party yet in addition managed an extreme blow on the gathering structure that was assembled and solidified throughout the years.

The loksabha elections in 1977 saw one of the rare occasions in the political history of India of opposition parties uniting with the purpose of knocking out the Congress Party from the throne of Delhi by forming the Janata Party. The opposition conglomerate handed the Congress one of the worst electoral defeats since its inception losing more than 200 seats and nine percent popularvotes. The Congress (I) (I for Indira) would have declined beyond redemption but the internal bickering within the Janata Party and the subsequent split provided it

a window to regroup itself. The low index of opposition unity, the witch hunt of the Indian National Congress leaders for emergency excesses and the repositioning of the Congress Party on stability plank brought it back to power with a big majority in the 1980 loksabha elections. After the killing of Indira Gandhi, the leadership stick passed on to Rajiv Gandhi who led the party (Congress) to a huge victory in 1984 loksabha elections winning a record of 415 seats mainly due to the sympathy wave created by the killing of Indira Gandhi. The Congress party came under the cloud of Bofors scam and lost its political pre-eminence and single party dominance in the 1989 loksabha elections.

The Indian National Congress came back to power after the 1991 Lok Sabha elections and managed the nation with an obvious command between 1971-1988 and remained the biggest political outfit in the vicinity of 1989 and 1996. However, its authoritative structure and mass help base was generously stressed because of identity clique and the "high charge" cultures that flourished and disintegrated the brand evaluations of the Congress party. The purposes behind the decay of the gathering are complex however it could be basically ascribed to the concentrated administration.

The other factors include the consensus in decision making was brushed under the carpet, the broad basing and nurturing of leadership in states and local level came to a grinding halt, the invincibility tag of the party was punctured by two electoral defeats, the ivory tower syndrome of top leadership isolated it from grass root workers and the party workers lost its zeal to connect with the people and keep the momentum going for the party. The win ability ratios of the Congress and the political halos the only party which could govern India were seriously breached during this period.

#### **Lok Sabha Elections and Performance of Indian National Congress (Indira-Rajiv Gandhi):**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Seats</b>	<b>Seats Won</b>	<b>Vote Share (in Percent)</b>	<b>Gain/Loss (Vote Share)</b>
1971	518	362	43.7	+2.9
1977	543	154	34.5	-9.2
1980	543	353	42.7	+8.2
1984	543	415	48.1	+5.9
1989	543	197	39.5	-8.6
1991	543	244	36.4	-3.1

(Source: Election Commission of India- <https://www.eci.nic.in>)

The period in the vicinity of 1992 and 1996 could be viewed as an interregnum for the gathering as the administration changed hands and it was the first case when the Congress president was not from Nehru Gandhi

family. The gathering's political fortunes plunging further south as the post Mandal and Mandir period of politicking saw the ascent and development of personality based local gatherings and the Hindutva based BJP. The order in the 1996 loksabha election was against the Congress which surrendered political space to the BJP. The saran party made further advances into the Congress stronghold by winning 182 seats in 1999 loksabha election and develops as the single biggest gathering. It framed an organization together with similarly invested parties under the flag of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and shaped the first conservative government at the Centre with Atal Bihari Vajpayi as the new Prime Minister of the country.

The Congress Party which realized that the Bhartiya Janata Party(BJP) could steal its thunder and emerge as a viable national party alternative, invited Sonia Gandhi who had kept away from politics after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, to take command and steer the party back into reckoning. This marks the third phase of Congress party politics which arrested the imminent decline and brought the party back to power at the Centre in 2004.

#### **INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (SONIA-RAHUL GANDHI) 1998 ONWARDS:**

The LokSabha election 2004 was a fight between the NDA drove by its prominent Prime minster Atal Bihari Vajpayi and the Congress drove United Progressive Alliance (UPA) sewed together under the administration of Sonia Gandhi. The NDA government had performed sensibly well, however the mobs in Gujarat and its "India Shining" effort did not run down well with voters and it lost the decisions to its fundamental foe. Manmohan Singh turned into the head administrator of the UPA government. The administration was weakened from a solitary individual to Manmohan-Sonia-Rahul troika which functioned admirably for a long time (2004-09) and in the 2009 loksabha elections could hold control prevailing upon 200 seats without anyone else. The noteworthy execution of the Congress Party was because of the consolidated authority of Manmohan Singh, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), cultivate advance waiver conspire, master poor strategies of the UPA government, confidence of steadiness and triumph of mainstream powers.

The increases made in 2009 by the Congress Party were lost halfway as the UPA II government was blockaded by various tricks, high inflation and joblessness rates, cost rise and the arrangement loss of motion that hit the nation over the most recent two years of its administration. The general decision in 2014 denoted the genuine decrease of the Congress as it saw a "wave" race with another measurement as there were two streams running at the same time in the nation. The first ebb and flow was a solid hostile to incumbency wave against the Congress which pushed it count of seats to 44 which is the most minimal and its vote share fell underneath 20%.



The second wave was agreeable to the BJP PM assign Narendra Modi which pushed the saran party back to control in Delhi with an agreeable greater part for the saran party flagging the start of the BJP strength in national range of energy legislative issues.

### Lok Sabha Elections and Performance of Indian National Congress (Sonia-Rahul Gandhi):

Year	Total Seats	Seats Won	Vote Share (in Percent)	Gain/Loss (Vote Share)
1998	543	141	25.8	-3
1999	543	114	28.3	+2.5
2004	543	145	26.5	-1.9
2009	543	206	28.6	+2.1
2014	543	44	19.5	-9.1

(Source: Election Commission of India- <https://www.eci.nic.in>)

### CAUSES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DECLINE OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS:

The seeds of the decay of the Congress party which were sown amid the time of Nehru developed and developed amid the Indira administration before turning into an out and out tree in the Sonia-Rahul period which is well on the way to fall because of its tyrannical weight. The explanations behind the decay of the Congress party which surfaced amid the Indira period were not tended to by the present administration and kept in limbo. The working of the Congress government and gathering brought forth new issues which hurried its downslide further. The double control of the Manmohan Singh government and the Congress party by the Gandhi family worked was adjusted legitimately and functioned admirably at first however it kept running into unpleasant climate in the second term.

The remote control of the administration and dealing with the cooperation accomplices made erosions which snowballed into a genuine of political emergency and appointive reaction in 2014 hosting's. The high charge disorder which chose party matters before at national and state matters was reached out at neighborhood levels with no interface with party functionaries at ground zero. The nonattendance of a solid pioneer inside the Congress is another significant factor.

The Congress under Nehru was an omnibus gathering which co-picked the ideological shades of the correct Center-left and fabricated an accord to govern India giving no breathing space to political gatherings of left and right introduction to spread their political and constituent wings. The authority and gathering association were in harmony and similarly solid with no significant resistance to challenge its matchless quality. The



command of Indira after an extreme fight with right initiative in the Congress and resulting ejection made ready for Center to left approaches making her a standout amongst the most well-known pioneer of her opportunity. The appealing initiative of Indira debilitated the gathering rank and file and she put money on unified and legitimate choices to manage the nation and keep up the single party strength of the Congress.

## CONCLUSION:

To conclude it can be said that the Congress Party at present does not have a solid pioneer and workable structure and its ideological plan of liberal welfare arrangements for poor people has been seized by the BJP which is utilizing it cunningly to position itself as the single predominant gathering in Indian governmental issues. The Congress needs to rework its ideological motivation and open the passage doors of the gathering for individuals with rightist perspectives inside its wide range of mainstream governmental issues to counter the BJP surge in the nation. The gathering can resuscitate itself by remaking the gathering association by repopulating its units with infantry and flag bearers at the grassroots level and set up reasonable objectives to complete a political bounce back in the far off future.

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