

Opportunities and Obstacles for BJP in Karnataka Legislative Assembly Poles-2023

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Abstract

“Democracy is a form and a method of government whereby revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without bloodshed”¹. India is the world’s largest Multiparty Democracy². BJP is one among the national Political Parties³. It has gradually shot up to prominence in Indian Politics. Currently, it is in power at the Union and 18 states including Karnataka⁴. This evidences its power potential. During 2023 summer, Karnataka will be witnessing heat and light of Electoral Politics⁵. Therefore, this paper examines these significant questions: Will BJP come to power once again in Karnataka after poles? What all the opportunities and obstacles it has on its way? Although, it is premature to precisely predict, it is necessary to understand Opportunities and obstacles for BJP in ensuing 2023 Karnataka Legislative Assembly Election.

Key Words: Democracy, Electoral Politics, BJP, AAP, JDS, SDPI, Operation Lotus, Reservation, Lingayat, Kurubas, Vakkaligas

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Opportunities:

1. Polarization of Votes: “The key to community is the acceptance, in fact the celebration of our individual and cultural differences. It is also the key to world peace.”⁶. Karnataka is a Multi-Religious State⁷. Still, BJP is vying for Hindu Votes. As per 2011 census, Karnataka has 84% Hindus and 16% Minorities⁸. Therefore, BJP relies upon Hindu Votes and sensitive issues like: CAA, DJ Halli and KJ Halli Incidents, Enactment of the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Act, 2020⁹, Progress in the Construction of Sri Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Hijab, Hajan, Halal, Srirangapatana’s Jumma Masjid, Chamarajpet’s Idga and Varanasi’s Gyanavapi disputes and Religious Conversion for getting more number of Hindu Votes.

2. Congress (I)’s Scandals: Corruption is leukemia everywhere. BJP is eager to use, D. K Shivakumar’s disproportionate assets¹⁰, Siddaramaiah’s Arkavati Denotification¹¹, Habolt watch¹² and Teachers Recruitment Scandals and Rahul and Sonia Gandhi’s National Herald Cases¹³ to corner Congress (I) in 2023 Assembly Election.

3. Emergence of AAP and SDPI: AAP and SDPI are growing as alternatives to Congress and JDS in Karnataka^{(14) (15)}. AAP is citing its Delhi government’s performance for attracting Karnataka Voters. Similarly, SDPI is raking up communally sensitive issues like Hijab, Halal, Hajan and etc for countering BJP. But, its electoral strategy may likely to divide Muslim Minority votes among Non BJP parties.

4. BJP’s Top Brass: BJP’s top brass is the envy of all Political Parties. According to Morning Consult Intelligence Survey Report-2022, PM Modi has surpassed Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin in Global Popularity by scoring 78% of the approval rates from Indians⁽¹⁶⁾. Therefore, PM Modi, Amit Shah, Jaishankar, Yogi Adityanath and B. S Yediyurappa’s charismatic leadership may capture the minds of Karnataka Voters.

5. Infighting in Congress (I): KPCC President DK Shivkumar and Opposition Leader Siddaramaiah are covertly fighting for CM post⁽¹⁷⁾. Minorities (14%), Kurubas (7.1%) and Dalit Right are supporting Siddaramaiah⁽¹⁸⁾. A section of Vokkaligas (8.1%) are supporting D. K. Shivakumara⁽¹⁹⁾. This infighting may reward BJP.

6. Reservation Hike:BJP is wooing SCs and STs by issuing ordinance on 23rd October 2022 for increasing reservation for SCs from 15% to 17%and for STs from 3% to 7%⁽²⁰⁾. This grand strategy may help BJP in winning over SCs and STs who constitute 1/4th of the State Population.

7. BJP Workforce and Financial Strength:In 2019-20, BJP's official work force was 180 million(14% of The Indian Population)⁽²¹⁾ and 4847 Crore Rupees Party Fund (69% of total parties fund)⁽²²⁾. But Congress (I) had only 45 million official workers (3.3% of The Indian Population)⁽²³⁾ and 588 crore Rupees Party Fund (8.42% of total parties fund)⁽²⁴⁾. This vivifies BJP's superiority over Congress (I).

8. Decline of Crime Rates: Decline of crime rates as per IPC from 1, 48,000 in 2016 to 1,06,330 in 2020 in Karnataka is itself a remarkable achievement⁽²⁵⁾. Karnataka and Gujarat are identified as least crime rate states in India⁽²⁶⁾. BJP may likely to place this before electorate in 2023.

9. Reduction of Unemployment: Reducing unemployment is the responsibility of the government. According to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy survey, unemployment rate was 21% during Covid⁽²⁷⁾. But, it declined to 7.8% in June 2022. Same survey reported that Both Gujarat and Karnataka have less unemployment rate in the country⁽²⁸⁾. State BJP may use this for its advantage.

Obstacles:

Although, BJP's path is strewn with flowers it is not free from thorns. These obstacles prove this.

1. Gruesome Murder of BJP workers:BJP's Hindu activists like Harsha, Praveenkumar Nettaru, Kannaiah Lal of Udaypur for his support to Nupur Sharma's statement⁽²⁹⁾ and murder of Muhammed Fazil of Suratkal by Hindu youths in retaliation to Praveenkumar Nettaru⁽³⁰⁾ mirror communal violence. BJP activists damaged its President Nalinkumar Katil's car during protest against the murder of Nettaru⁽³¹⁾; indicates BJP activist's anguish against government.

2. Corruption Charges: Corruption charges are noose around state BJP's neck. Mr. Kempanna the President of the Contractors Association and Santosh Patil's accusations⁽³²⁾⁽³³⁾ impelled congress (I) to launch a tireless "PayCM and SayCM" campaign against BJP⁽³⁴⁾. Although, BJP government has cancelled PSI recruitment⁽³⁵⁾ and ordered investigation even into the 2012-13 and 2014-15 congress (I)'s teacher recruitment scams⁽³⁶⁾ it cannot escape from the public criticism. These charges are demoralizing party workers.

3. Price Rise:Consumers are boiling with wrath against BJP government for ever increasing price rise. 1liter petrol rate was 73 rupees in 2019⁽³⁷⁾; its current rate is more than 100 rupees⁽³⁸⁾. In October 2021, inflation was 4.8%⁽³⁹⁾. But it rose to 7.41% in October 2022 on the basis of Consumer Price Index⁽⁴⁰⁾. In 2019, The Food Price Inflation was 6.81%⁽⁴¹⁾; it increased to 13.42% in October 2022⁽⁴²⁾. Opposition Parties will place this before the voters to beat the BJP.

4. "Operation Lotus": Since 2008, BJP has been using "Operation Lotus" for engineering defection⁽⁴³⁾. In 2019, it toppled Congress, JDS Coalition Government by this mechanism⁽⁴⁴⁾. It was widely reported that BJP had paid use amount of money to Congress and JDS's MLAs to defect to BJP⁽⁴⁵⁾. Conscience keeping voters and politicians are naturally intolerant about this means of dirty politics.

5. Ineffective Leadership in State BJP: State BJP leadership is found to be ineffective. Although, CM Basavaraj Bommai, Eeshwarappa, Jagadeesh Shetter and others claim to be the leaders they are not mass leaders like BS Yediyurappa, Siddaramaiah and H.D Kumaraswamy. Its leadership condition is comparable to Current National Congress Leadership. This may be an obstacle to BJP in Poles.

6. Reservation Politics:Dominant Communities are demanding more reservation in the wake of reservation for SCs and STs. Panchamasali's are urging to shift their reservation from 3B (4%) to 2A (12%)⁽⁴⁶⁾. Vokkaligas are demanding to increase their reservation from 4% to 8%⁽⁴⁷⁾. Kurubas are demanding to include them into ST category⁽⁴⁸⁾. This rat race for reservation may likely to hinder BJP.

7. Ineffective Disaster Management:BJP Government's Ineffective Disaster Management appears to be a glaring obstacle. People of various Districts of Karnataka and Bengaluru City (1704 millimeter) have suffered due to heavy rain, flood and inundation since 2018⁽⁴⁹⁾. 'Poor Urban Governance' and 'Rajakaluve Encroachment' are responsible for the submergence of Bengaluru. BJP government's action against illegal encroachment of Rajakaluve is found to be discriminatory⁽⁵⁰⁾. Therefore, voters are unhappy with the BJP.

8. Farmers Woes: According to 2011 census, Karnataka has 13.74 Million Farmers⁽⁵²⁾. Nearly 55 lack farmers of Karnataka are receiving 6000 rupees from PM Kisan Nidhi and 4000 rupees from Government of Karnataka annually. But unfulfilled demands of the sugarcane growers and burning problems of the farmers will once again crop up during 2023 poles.

9. Miscellaneous Issues: Over and above, some miscellaneous issues will bother BJP in 2023 poles. BJP Leader's Unparliamentary words, Imposition of Hindi, Covid Mismanagement, State BJP Government's inability to get favorable development packages for state, Unfulfilled promises of the BJP's Election Manifesto and Text Book Controversy are still bitter pills to swallow.

In conclusion it may be stated that the impact of above mentioned opportunities and obstacles will however be determined by the BJP's effort, receptivity of the voters and Opposition Parties ability to contain BJP and convince the voters.

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