

Yadan, B. (2022). *The Rise of the BJP: The making of the world's Largest Political Party*. Penguin. India. 334 pp. Rs. 457.

Union cabinet minister Bhupendra Yadav and eminent economist Ila Patnaik in their work, *The Rise of the BJP: The making of the world's Largest Political Party*, lucidly narrates the story of Bharatiya Janata Party achieving political dominance nationally under the able leadership of Narendra Modi. Though there are plenty of works on the Bharatiya Janata Party by eminent academics and journalists, there has always been a shortage of what can be termed an 'insider account.' This work by Yadav and Patnaik necessarily tries to fill this gap. Divided into twelve chapters, it starts with the story of Bharatiya Jana Sangh and ends with the 2019 general election campaign. Talking about Jana Sangh, the authors argue that from 1952 to 1967, notwithstanding insignificant political success in terms of seats. It continues to focus on strengthening its organizational structure under the leadership of Deen Dayal Upadhyay. An essential aspect of the Jana Sangh which separated it from other political parties of the time was its first generation of leaders like Deen Dayal Upadhyay, Nanaji Deshmukh, Sunder Singh Bhandari, Jagannathrao Joshi, and others started their life as *pracharak* (ideologue) of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Their work in Sangh resulted in patience and ideological commitment becoming inseparable from their life. This helps them single-mindedly work to strengthen party organization against all odds.

We often see parties like Hindu Mahasabha, Ram Rajya Parishad, and Jana Sangh from the same lens. This work of Yadav and Patnaik argues that Jana Sangh founder Shyama Prasad Mukherjee had developed significant differences with Hindu Mahasabha over the question of the Party not providing space to non-Hindus and revolving around the so-called upper caste. This resulted in Mukherjee resigning from the Hindu Mahasabha and, after sustained deliberation with Madhav Sadashivrao Golwalkar, the second chief of the RSS, he formed Bharatiya Jana Sangh.

Talking about the electoral aspect of Jana Sangh, the authors illustrate with data that though Jana Sangh was not winning significant seats, its vote percentage was continuously rising. For example, in the first Lok Sabha election of 1952 party won 3 seats with 3.06 percent of votes. A decade later, in 1962, it rose to 14 seats with 6.44 percent of votes. This signifies that despite the towering presence of Nehru and the legacy of the national movement with Congress, Jana Sangh was continuously increasing its foothold in national politics and slowly but surely was emerging as the alternative to Congress. The book also provides essential insights, like after the emergency when the opposition collectively formed the Janata Party, Jana Sangh, under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee was its most prominent constituent. In the 1977 general election, out of 271 seats won by the Janata Party, 98 seats belonged to the Jana Sangh group. Despite this, the Jana Sangh leadership accepted Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister. Only three of its members, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani, and Satish Chandra Agarwal, were made ministers.

Yadav and Patnaik highlight that despite merging with the Janata Party, the Jana Sangh leaders did not lose their unique identity. This is why when some leaders of the Janata Party objected to Jana Sangh, members of the Party having a continuous affiliation with the RSS. Jana Sangh leaders in the Janata Party happily came out of it and formed a new party, but neither compromised their ideology nor their relation with the Sangh.

There are many facts in the books that, as a student of Political Science, provide us with a crucial vantage point to ponder. For example, BJP's electoral performance in the 1984 Lok Sabha election, when the Party won only two seats, has been highlighted many times. Still, scant attention had been paid to its vote share of 7.74 percent, which was second in that election. This signifies that despite the sympathy wave in favor of the Congress Party created after Indira Gandhi's assassination, BJPs continued to muster a significant social base.

The most important aspect of this book is its last five chapters, which narrate the story of BJP's occupying a dominant position nationally and in most states since 2014.

BJP's electoral success in two general elections and in many state assemblies since 2014 has been chiefly seen through the prism of majoritarianism, communalism, polarization, etc. This book takes us away from these overused sites to study BJP and present certain unexplored domains of the Party before us. The authors highlight how Narendra Modi and Amit Shah strengthen BJP's organization nationally by replicating their Gujrat strategy. They first decided that Party would contest all elections from Panchayat to Parliament with all its rigor and resources. How BJP added new members through missed calls, amended the constitution to upgrade primary members into active members, co-opted prominent leaders from other parties who were disgruntled in their own Party, creating new positions like *Panna Pramukh* (in-charge of the particular page of the electoral roll) and giving them due importance in the Party are all discussed in detail in the book.

Yadav and Patnaik have especially highlighted how both Modi and Shah learned from the Party's defeat in the 2004 general election and ensured better communication with the masses. According to the authors, whether Man Ki Baat or devising the Namo app is the end product of this thinking. Badri Narayan, in his recent book 'The Republic of Hindutva.' argues that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emerged in the Indian Political landscape as a political and social leader. The authors of this book also tend to suggest that direction. Modi's initiatives like *Man ki baat*, *swach Bharat Abhiyan*, *Namami Gange*, *Beti bachao*, and *Beti Padhao* with commoners. He appears as a social leader whose concern is not to win only elections but to bring substantive change in people's life by talking about social problems.

This work also has some shortcomings, like any good work. As an insider, Yadav could have provided more profound insights into many incidents of the Party, like what led to the marginalization of K.N Govindachaya, relations between the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government and RSS from 1999 to 2004, and their differences. Discussions within the Party after the loss in the Bihar assembly election in 2015 etc.

To conclude, I would like to say that one should read this book to understand how BJP under Narendra Modi is redefining Indian politics and why the opposition is failing to counter him nationally and in most states.

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