

Municipal Election in Jaipur

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An election is a stirring event, not only because it provides an opportunity to the electorate to exercise its choice but also because it brings up the controversies of social life to the surface and presents programmes for the future.

An election to a local body is of even greater interest for it deals with things which are very close to the people. The voters know the candidates more intimately and can really grasp the issues and programmes and so they are much more concerned about their choice and the results.

The election to Jaipur Municipal Committee in October 1961 was unusually interesting, both for the politician as well as the political scientist, for a number of reasons.

First, it was after more than a period of three years that the electorate was called upon to elect a Municipal Council. In 1958 the Municipal Councillors had resigned their seals en bloc in protest against the transfer of the High Court Bench to Jodhpur and since then no election had been held.

Second, the election was coming shortly before the General Election. Jaipur being the capital of Rajasthan, it occupies a strategic position in directing and influencing the election in the rest of the State.

The election was also memorable because of its results—it has not only returned an opposition party as the single largest group but, by eliminating the Independents, it has also advanced the voters' political consciousness.

In view of the great significance of the event, the Political Science Forum of Rajasthan College, Jaipur, set up an Election Study Group to study the elections, and an attempt is made here to present the findings of the group, whose limited resources were generously supplemented by the untiring zeal and enthusiasm of the students.

THE election was originally scheduled to be held on July 23 1961 but from the very beginning there were doubts and uncertainty about the election being held on this date as some of the interested persons and groups had moved the High Court on a writ petition. A Congress M P from Ajmer pleaded on behalf of Shri Jugal Kishore, a resident of Jaipur, that the election should be postponed on the following grounds:

- (1) The voters' lists were incorrect;
- (2) Election notices had not been properly published by the Government; and
- (3) Wards had not been delimited on the basis of population.

The Government pleader opposed the writ; so did the Jan Sangh and a number of Independent candidates who argued that the plaintiff had no right to present the writ, as his personal rights as citizen were not affected in any way. The advocate of the plaintiff quoted the precedent of the Supreme Court decision of 1947, postponing the Ajmer Municipal elections on the ground that the list of voters was incorrect. The legal wrangle was ended by Justice Jagat Narain who held that, though there were sub-

stantial mistakes in the voters' lists, there was no reason why the election should be postponed, for disputes arising from mistakes in voters' list could be taken up in election petitions after the elections. All election activity, however, came to a standstill when at an emergency meeting the State Cabinet decided to postpone the election to October 1. This was greeted with joy by the Congress candidates, but the Jan Sangh was very bitterly disappointed.

Much of the election strategy and to a great extent, the results depend on the candidates—their number and quality, their political affiliations and experience, their personal following and enlightened leadership in the localities. As compared to the situation in July 1961, 244 as against 352 candidates filed nominations and only one as against ten was rejected. After withdrawals, 182 candidates—15 less than on the previous occasion—remained in the field. The city area was divided into 39 wards and four of them were to elect two members each. Thus, for each seat there were 4.232 candidates. Two of the wards had as many as eight each and in two others there was a straight contest between Jan Sangh and Congress. In six of the wards there was a triangular fight and in eleven there were four candidates

each. No ward had returned a member unopposed. Political affiliations also provide another trend in civic politics. Congress and Jan Sangh both contested all the 43 seats (Jan Sangh supported 3 Independents). P S P put up 24 candidates. Both the Swatantra party and the C P I were out of the picture, though one of the Independents gave his affiliation to C P I and another to Swatantra party. The other Independents were largely on their own and some of them had the backing of certain political, social and professional groups.

Lawyers Turn to Politics

We covered 80 candidates in as many as 21 wards and tried to persuade them to answer our questionnaire. A few of the candidates rudely refused to answer the questions. They suspected us to be spies of the Government or the rival candidates. Some candidates were very nice and one of them at least spared an hour for the members of the group and not only gave the information they wanted but also entertained them to tea. If the information about 80 candidates can be taken as representative the overall picture was quite encouraging. The following table shows that the majority of the candidates is in their thirties and forties:

Age group	Number of candidates
25-30	12 (15)
31-40	33 (41-25)
41-50	17 (21-25)
51-60	9 (11-25)
Above 60	3 (3-75)
Not known	6 (7-50)
	80 (100)

Note : Figure in brackets is the per cent of candidates belonging to the particular age group.

The educational attainments and occupational pattern revealed that 28 of the 80 candidates were law graduates, of whom 25 gave legal practice as their substantive occupation. The lawyers were closely followed by businessmen who numbered 22. Business, we find, is an ambiguous term and may mean any thing from the ownership of a petty shop or a small tea-stall to big business in jewellery and export-import. There were 11 other graduates and postgraduates and three of them were in the teaching profession—one being the Principal of a local college. Twelve candidates were Matriculates or Intermediates and another twelve were non-Matric. Fourteen did not possess proper schooling, but all of them could be classified as literates. Out of the 80 candidates we studied, six were private medical practitioners and four were in private service. Two of them were retired Government servants, two were active journalists, one owned a printing press, one was a leading bookseller and one was a newspaper hawker. There were three contractors and three independent artisans (tailor, mistry and watch-repairer); one gave his occupation as landlord and one as student. Occupation of five candidates could not be ascertained; two of them were said to be unemployed. This provides an idea of the professions and interests participating in the election.

Only One Woman

The caste composition of the candidates also varied from ward to ward depending on the strength of the different caste groups. In one ward all the three candidates were Brahmins, whereas in another ward a majority of the candidates was Muslim. Still, the higher castes were more active in civic politics. Out of 80 candidates, there were 18

Brahmins, 16 Jains, 14 Vaishyas, 5 Kayasthas, 5 Muslims, 1 Sikh and 10 others. Castes of 11 candidates could not be ascertained.

The locality rule was observed almost in all cases. Only two of the candidates were living in parts of the city other than those which they wanted to represent. The predominance of the local man is taking deep roots, as outsiders are resented unless they have close connections with the ward in other ways. Besides, 22 of the 80 candidates claimed to possess experience as members of the Municipality, and quite a number of them were former student-leaders or were associated with various, social and professional organisations. Another interesting and conspicuous fact was the presence of only one woman in the list and even she was not taken seriously by the voters and only about 125 persons voted for her.

National Issues Dominate

The issues involved in the election and the promises made by the parties and candidates are important as indicators not only of the future set-up but of the present mood of the electorate. One candidate in an appeal suggested that the municipal elections should be contested on the civic problems of the wards, but this advice was not followed. To quote Mackenzie, "It is never possible to keep national politics out of local government, but where local government is strong national politics may take on a special character because they are anchored to the rock of local interests, and because the careers of politicians depend on sponsoring and mediating between such interests".

As the party platforms were dominated by national and State leaders, the general trend of the meetings was to harangue on national and inter-national problems, the local issues just getting a passing reference. The Congress was still exploiting its role in the struggle for Independence, and heavily banked on the popularity of Nehru. It criticised the Jan Sangh as a communal party and laid emphasis on national integration and Panchsheel. etc. The Jan Sangh directed its attack against the Government's weak foreign policy and the surrender of national interests. On the eve of elections,

the State Chief Minister was arguing that Jan Sangh elements were responsible for Gandhiji's murder, while a little distance away, the Jan Sangh leader in the State Assembly was alleging that the Nehru Government was responsible for the death of Shri Shyama Prasad Mukerji. This atmosphere of charges and counter-charges provided little opportunity for enlightened discussions on civic problems. A very crucial issue, on which the members of Municipality had resigned *en bloc* in 1958, was the transfer of the High Court Bench. On June 30, 1961, an emergency meeting of the Bar Association called upon the parties and individuals to contest the municipal elections on this issue. The Bar Association, which had spearheaded the agitation three years ago, wanted to assume the role of a super-party and demanded that, once elected, the members must be prepared to resign on the High Court issue on its instructions. But this issue was not significant in the current election and excepting the P S P manifesto, none even mentioned it. Even the P S P paid only lip service to the issue.

Manifestoes Identical

The three parties contesting the election issued manifestoes and the individual candidates distributed pamphlets or appeals signed by influential supporters. A close study of the three manifestoes throws interesting light on the election programmes. But for minor differences of approach, attitude and detail, all the three parties presented almost identical programmes. Still one could see that the Congress was handicapped by its position as the ruling party and could not make its programme very attractive. The P S P programme, characterised by pathetic unrealism, was attractive but unattainable. The Jan Sangh gave an aggressive tone to its programme and focussed attention on specific promises rather than on formal and ambiguous generalities. The general emphasis in the Jan Sangh manifesto was on cleanliness and a housing programme. Both the P S P and the Jan Sangh wanted abolition of the Urban Improvement Board and assumption of its functions by the Municipality. All were agreed on the need to stop adulte-

ration and establish Mandis. Congress repeated its promise of starting a milk dairy in the city. The need for expansion of reading-room facilities and parks was stressed by all.

The P S P wanted water and electricity supply and the city transport to be brought under the Municipality with the dual 'aim of increasing municipal resources and providing better amenities. The other two parties promised increased facilities without municipalisation of transport. The P S P wanted that the town hall should be restored to the Municipality and the Congress also promised some arrangements to that end. The Congress outlined no taxation policy. The P S P promised to abolish the cycle-tax, reduce house-tax remove octroi duty on necessary articles and increase the duty on luxury goods. It also wanted transfer of the proceeds of entertainment-tax etc to the Municipality.

The Jan Sangh was more specific in its promises. It declared that the present taxation policy was faulty and promised that houses whose rental value was less than Rs 25 would be exempted from the house-tax. Jan Sangh also wanted a master plan for the city's development. It promised that salaries of municipal staff would be brought *par* with those of State employees, and that the importance of Jaipur as a tourist centre would be maintained and enhanced. It is difficult to say to what extent these promises did tilt the vote in its favour, but it is clear that the Jan Sangh's programme was more aggressive, bold, specific, definite and at the same time attractive and realistic than those of its rivals.

'Civil War' Look

The election campaign itself was unusually keen. As the election drew close, it almost appeared as if the city was preparing for a civil war. Each party had a central election *office* and a campaign committee which was managed and directed by its State-level leaders. The Jan Sangh leader in the Assembly and other prominent party leaders directed the party's campaign. The State Home Minister, Shri Ram Kishore Vyas, who hails from Jaipur City, was the Congress campaign director and Shri M Vyas,

M L A from Bikaner, directed the P S P strategy. Even a newspaper was launched on the occasion to support the Purusharthi Congress candidates. Appeals signed by respectable and influential citizens were distributed on behalf of individual candidates and the local *press* gave top priority to election news.

Organised parties are at an advantage in arranging public meetings and almost all the meetings visited by our investigators were organised by *one* of the three parties. Public meetings on 'chauthars' and in the open markets were well attended and aroused much enthusiasm in the audience. Both the Congress and the Jan Sangh had requisitioned the services of some national leaders and all important State leaders of the parties were in Jaipur. A Central Cabinet Minister, as well as the Jan Sangh leader in Lok Sabha, visited the city. Ward meetings were also not uncommon but attendance was very thin. Perhaps, a speech on national and international problems did "not impress the voters when it was delivered *in* the street. The last day of the campaign witnessed great activity and the Congress organised 20 ward meetings on that day, Jan Sangh organised 15 and P S P 4.

We made a special study of the campaign in two wards and found that in one of the wards, the Congress candidate was able to bring a number of Ministers and M L As to address all ward meetings in his support. In Adarshnagar, the Jan Sangh candidate organised a number of meetings addressed by important leaders whereas his rival openly said that he did not believe in creating noise by public meetings. Attendance at public meetings depended on the place, the organisers and also the main speakers. A poet-singer from Punjab was the star attraction at Jan Sangh meetings and he attended several meetings the same evening. He was an asset to his party and was the biggest vote-catcher of the campaign. The Swatantra party meeting on September 29 was an event of the election. Maharani Gayatri Devi spoke for about 10 minutes. The audience at the meeting was a record for the election. The Swatantra attack on Congress might have indirectly helped the Jan Sangh,

Fifty One Pairs of Bullocks

Processions and symbols were important as means of impressing the voters and relieving the drabness of political issues. In ward 14 a candidate arranged a procession with band, displaying his election sign. The Congress procession on the eve of the election was well advertised and well attended. It included three bands, a number of elephants, horses, jeeps, buses, trucks tongas and fifty-one pairs of bullocks. Party leaders, including State Ministers and a number of representatives of various pro-Congress organisations, took part in the procession. The procession route was about 3 miles long and it ended in a public meeting. Symbols and slogans impress the modern man as they did his primitive ancestors. In one of the wards the candidate had displayed an actual cycle on the roof of his house and on the top of a taxi and demanded votes for the common man's vehicle. There was an elephant procession and a poem read from the Congress platform said, "bullocks are the sinews of prosperity, so vote for Congress".

The public functions and spectacles notwithstanding, there was a sincere realisation that the voter must be contacted personally at his own door. In one of the wards both the rival candidates began the day with a round of the ward, making personal requests to the voters. The Congress canvassing was headed by the Home Minister, but in a keenly-contested ward the Jan Sangh had the benefit of the devoted service of a band of R S S volunteers numbering about 50 to 70. Personal canvassing by small groups was useful because the voters felt insulted if they were not approached in this way. Door-to-door canvassing was strengthened by the support of various groups sympathetic to the parties. The Balmiki Mazdoor Sangh and the Dalit Varg Satagh issued statements in support of the Congress. Most of the candidates did not give satisfactory answers about the number of volunteers or the particular groups whose support was assured to them. Nevertheless it was not difficult to see that in most cases the volunteers were hired and could not make sincere efforts to persuade the voter.

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Gossip — Part of Campaign

Study of voting behaviour, especially in Indian conditions, is a formidable task and, as our resources were limited, it was decided not to attempt it. Yet, a few facts which throw some light on the voting behaviour may be mentioned *here*. There was a general impression in a Government servants' colony that they were expected not to vote for the opposition candidate — they should vote for the Congress candidates, or an Independent or not vote at all.

The campaign, the candidates and the general climate of election politics exercised tremendous influence over the electorate. Gossip and friends' suggestions were as important as formal election propaganda but intimidation and bribery also could have been of decisive significance in certain cases. Money plays a crucial role in elections but naturally none would be willing to discuss his election accounts. However, it was noticed that the clever candidates, irrespective of party colours, had deployed all conceivable means of conveyance to provide a free lift to the voter from home to the polling station. This was very effective way of influencing the voters, particularly the older ones.

Voting techniques also influenced voting behaviour and the illiterate and the handicapped and the women in particular could be made to cast vote for a candidate other than the one of their own choice. During our visit to one of the polling booths, it was actually reported that a peon was trying to influence the voters' choice by suggestions and by stressing on a particular symbol on the ballot paper. The putting of the rubber stamp in a wrong way would invalidate the vote and thereby nullify the voters' choice. Though the number of invalid votes was 'not substantial, this could be one of the factors. Moreover, the speed of polling and the efficiency of management decided if the voter was prepared to wait patiently in the queue. Efficient organisation of the polling offices of candidates and secret canvassing within the polling booths by their supporters were last minute, but no less effective, attempts to influence the voter. The apathy of the voters is reflected in

the fact that only about 42 per cent of votes were polled in the election.

Results, Not Surprising

The election results were unusual though not unexpected. Just after the polling was over, the expectations of various parties were high and the Congress hoped to get a clear majority by winning 29 seats. Jan Sangh estimated that it would win 21 seats and the P S P 12. Several Independents were also confident of victory. Till late night on October 3, out of the 30 seats, results of which had been announced, Jan Sangh had captured 19 and was in a jubilant mood; the Congress could get only 7 and the P S P and Independents two each. The next day's counting changed the balance giving a larger share of seats to the Congress. Ultimately, Jan Sangh secured 20 seats and with the support of 3 Independents won a clear majority in the 43 member Municipality. Congress won 17, P S P 2 and Independents 4. In reality — there was only one Independent member as the other three were Jan Sangh supporters and at one stage, even this lone Independent was reported to have extended his support to Jan Sangh, but the reports were contradicted.

Independents were routed in the election and the voting was largely on party lines. The polling was very poor when viewed in context of the heat the elections generated. Out of 2.32 lakh registered votes, only 97,000 voters or 42 per cent cast their votes. Jan Sangh polled 41,000 votes and Congress 35,000. P S P Candidates and the Independents together could poll only 21,000 votes. This development is of vital significance for the working of democracy and is evidence of the fact that in urban areas at least growing political consciousness is influencing the voters to vote for party programmes.

Rout of Congress

Another significant result was the defeat of almost all the important local Congress leaders with perhaps one exception. Jan Sangh won in the city proper but lost heavily in the outlying areas. In Shri R K Vyas' constituency the defeat of his party was spectacular. From ward No 8 to 18, Jan Sangh had an unbroken run of victories. The

highest vote polled by any candidate was 1,545 and the lowest was 2. The maximum margin of victory was as high as 893 and the minimum was 30. Thus the verdict of the voters was clear and definite.

The newly-elected Municipality is dominated by business and the legal profession. Looking to the apte and education of Members, the Municipality is capable of giving new leadership to the city. Much will, however, depend on the course of events in next six months. The Municipality's success will also depend on the co-operation of the Government. It is the sincere desire of all well-meaning and thinking democrats that the new Municipality should be given a chance to commit mistakes and learn by them.

Heavy Vehicles Factory

THE Defence Minister, Shri V K Krishna Menon, laid the foundation-stone of a Heavy Vehicles Factory at Avadi, near Madras, on December 29. The proposal for establishing this plant to manufacture tracked vehicles and other items of heavy engineering equipment required for the Defence Services was approved by the Government of India recently. It will be a self-contained unit making all the major assemblies, including the engine, gear-box and suspension units. The well-known British firm, Vickers-Armstrongs are the main consultants.

The military base at Avadi, the site for the factory, was set up during the last war to serve units in the South-East-Asia Command at an approximate cost of Rs 80 crores, with an employment potential of about 50,000. The existing defence assets at Avadi like the ready availability of suitable developed land and railway spurs and roads, and its proximity to a big town would not only reduce the capital expenditure on the project but also mean substantial saving in the time required for the execution of the project, which is a vital consideration.

The factory and the housing colony will be located in an area of 1400 acres, out of which about 770 acres of land belonging to the Madras Government have been given free by them.



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