

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

English **Indian People's Party**, the pro-Hindu **political party** of postindependence India. The party has enjoyed broad support among members of the higher castes and in northern India. It has attempted to attract support from lower castes, particularly through the appointment of several lower-caste members to prominent party positions.

Origin and Establishment

The BJP traces its roots to the **Bharatiya Jana Sangh** (BJS; Indian People's Association), which was established in 1951 as the political wing of the pro-Hindu group **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh** (RSS; "National Volunteers Corps") by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. The BJS advocated the rebuilding of India by Hindu culture and called for the formation of a strong unified state.

In 1967 the BJS gained a substantial foothold in the Hindi-speaking regions of northern India. Ten years later the party, led by **Atal Bihari Vajpayee**, joined three other political parties to form the **Janata Party** and took over the reins of government. Plagued by factionalism and internal disputes, however, the government collapsed in July 1979. The BJP was formally established in 1980, following a split by dissidents within the Janata coalition, whose leaders wanted to prohibit elected BJS officials from participating in the RSS. (Critics of the RSS have consistently accused it of political and religious extremism, particularly because one of its members had assassinated **Mahatma Gandhi**.) The BJS subsequently reorganized itself as the BJP under the leadership of Vajpayee, Lal Krishan Advani, and Murali Manohar Joshi.

The BJP advocated **Hindutva** ("Hindu-ness"), an ideology that sought to define Indian culture in terms of Hindu values, and it was highly critical of the secular policies and practices of the **Indian National Congress** (Congress Party). The BJP began to have electoral success in 1989, when it capitalized on an anti-Muslim feeling by calling for the erection of a Hindu temple in an area in **Ayodhya** considered sacred by Hindus but at that time occupied by the Babri Masjid (Mosque of **Bābur**). By 1991 the BJP had considerably increased its political appeal, capturing 117 seats in the **Lok Sabha** (lower chamber of the Indian parliament) and taking power in four states.

The demolition of the **Babri Masjid** in December 1992 by organizations seen to be associated with the BJP caused a major backlash against the party. The mosque's destruction also led to violence throughout the country that left more than 1,000 dead. The party was regarded

with skepticism and suspicion by many committed to [secularism](#) in contemporary India. To alleviate fear among the public, restore confidence in the party, and expand its base, the BJP's leaders undertook a series of *rath yatras* ("journeys on the carriage"), or political marches, in which the Hindu god [Rama](#) was symbolically invoked as the symbol of a cultural renaissance.

Electoral Success and The National Democratic Alliance Government

In elections in 1996, the BJP emerged as the largest single party in the Lok Sabha and was invited by India's president to form a government. However, its tenure in office was short-lived, as it could not muster the majority required to rule in the 545-member lower house. In 1998 the BJP and its allies were able to form a majority government with Vajpayee as [prime minister](#). In May of that year, nuclear weapons tests ordered by Vajpayee drew widespread international condemnation. After 13 months in office, coalition partner [All India Dravidian Progressive Federation \(All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam\)](#) withdrew its support, and Vajpayee was prompted to seek a [vote of confidence](#) in the Lok Sabha, which he lost by the margin of a single vote.

The BJP contested the 1999 parliamentary elections as the organizer of the [National Democratic Alliance \(NDA\)](#), a coalition of more than 20 national and regional parties. The alliance secured a governing majority, with the BJP winning 182 of the coalition's 294 seats. Vajpayee, as leader of the largest party in the alliance, was again elected prime minister. Although Vajpayee sought to resolve the country's long-standing conflict with [Pakistan](#) over the [Kashmir](#) region and made India a world leader in information technology, the coalition lost its majority in the 2004 parliamentary elections to the Congress Party's United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition, and Vajpayee resigned from office. The party's share of seats in the Lok Sabha was reduced from 137 to 116 in the 2009 parliamentary elections, as the UPA coalition again prevailed.

As the 2014 Lok Sabha elections grew near, however, the BJP's fortunes began to rise, largely because of growing discontent with Congress Party rule. [Narendra Modi](#), the longtime chief minister (head of government) of [Gujarat](#) state, was chosen to lead the BJP electoral campaign, thus making him the party's candidate for prime minister. The polling—held in several stages in April and May—produced an overwhelming victory for the BJP. The party won 282 seats outright, a clear majority in the chamber, and its NDA partners added 54 more. Shortly after election results were announced, Modi was named head of the party members in parliament, and he began forming a government that included not only

senior BJP officials but also several leaders from parties allied with the coalition. Modi was sworn in as prime minister on May 26, 2014.

BJP rule included a mixture of policies relating to the economy and to promoting *Hindutva*. On November 8, 2016, 500- and 1,000-rupee banknotes were demonetized with just a few hours' notices with the intent of stopping "black money"—cash used for illicit activities. More than 99 percent of the banknotes were returned and replaced, indicating even "black money" had been successfully exchanged and returned to circulation. But the policy did broaden the **income tax** base through increased bank activity and stimulated the use of cashless transactions. In 2017 the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced, reforming the collection of consumption taxes nationwide. Meanwhile, the BJP appealed to notions of *Hindutva* through measures such as banning the sale of cows for slaughter, a move later overturned by the Supreme Court. The party likewise legislated name changes for certain jurisdictions.

In late 2018 the BJP suffered large election losses. Five states held elections in November and December, and the BJP lost in all five, including its strongholds of **Madhya Pradesh**, **Rajasthan**, and **Chhattisgarh**. The loss was attributed to the rise in the **cost of living** and unemployment, and Modi's grandiose promises on **economic growth** remained unfulfilled. A security crisis over **Jammu and Kashmir** in February 2019, which raised tensions with Pakistan to their highest level in decades, won back some support for the party. As elections for the Lok Sabha drew near, the BJP dominated media attention. The party was returned to power in a landslide victory in the spring of 2019 and expanded its representation in the legislative body.

BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY:

The **Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)** is a national level political party in India that was formed to represent Bahujans (literally means "people in majority"), referring to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Castes (OBC), along with religious minorities.^[10] According to Kanshi Ram, when he founded the party in 1984, the Bahujans comprised 85 percent of India's population, but were divided into 6,000 different castes.^{[11][12]} The party claims to be inspired by the philosophy of Gautama Buddha, B. R. Ambedkar, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Narayana Guru, Periyar E. V. Ramasamy and Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj.^[13] Kanshi Ram named his protégée, Mayawati, as his successor in 2001. The BSP has its main base in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh where it was the second-largest party in the 2019 Indian general election with 19.3% of votes^[14] and in the 2017 Uttar Pradesh elections with over 22% of votes.^[15] Its election symbol is an elephant.

Ideology: Its self-proclaimed ideology is "Social Transformation and Economic Emancipation" of the "Bahujan Samaj". The "Bahujan Samaj", to them, consists of the lower-caste groups in India like the Scheduled Castes (SC), the Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the Other Backward Classes (OBC). It also includes religious minorities like Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, and Buddhists. They see these groups as victims of the "Manuwadi" system for millennia, a system which benefited upper-caste Hindus only. B. R. Ambedkar, a champion of lower-caste rights, is an important ideological inspiration. The party claims not to be prejudiced against upper-caste Hindus. In 2008, while addressing the audience, Mayawati said: "Our policies and ideology are not against any particular caste or religion. If we were anti-upper caste, we would not have given tickets to candidates from upper castes to contest elections".^[28] Satish Chandra Mishra, a BSP senior leader, is upper caste. The party also believe in egalitarianism and hold a strong emphasis on social justice.^[29]

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) Performance:

The BSP states that it represents the people at the lowest levels of the Hindu social system—those officially designated as members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes—as well as other religious and social minorities. The core support group of the BSP consists primarily of the Dalits (Scheduled Castes, formerly called untouchables). The party espouses no specific ideology, other than its opposition to and outspoken criticism of the inequalities of the caste system, and its main tenets are focused on respecting and upholding the constitutional rights of the lower members of Indian society.

The inspiration for the creation of the party was the longtime Dalit activist and constitutional expert Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956). Kanshi Ram (1934–2006), a Dalit and a civil service worker, was spurred into pro-Dalit activism in the 1960s after reading Ambedkar's writings and through witnessing firsthand caste discrimination. Ram's efforts to mobilize Dalits and other minorities led to his involvement in politics, in which he spent years crisscrossing Uttar Pradesh state and traveling throughout the country eliciting support for the cause. In 1984 he founded the party and led it until he was succeeded by Kumari Mayawati in 2003. Although Ram was responsible for building the support base for the party, Mayawati shaped and nurtured it into a powerful political force in Uttar Pradesh—India's most populous state—and at the national level. The state long remained the BSP's stronghold, and the party also has a presence in Punjab state.

The first significant political success for the BSP came in 1993, when it entered into an alliance with the Samajwadi (Socialist) Party for the governance of Uttar Pradesh. In 1995, however, the BSP left the coalition, and Mayawati, with support from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), became chief minister (head of government) in the state. Her first term lasted less than five months, until the BJP withdrew its support. In the next several years Mayawati served two more short stints as chief minister: 6 months in 1997 and another 15 months in 2002–03.

The BSP scored a decisive win in the 2007 Uttar Pradesh parliamentary elections, however, winning 206 of the assembly's 403 seats. The victory was largely ascribed to the party's radical shift in its core ideology from focusing exclusively on its low-caste support base to one that embraced all Indian communities, including the Hindu upper castes. In 2004 Mayawati had appointed Brahman lawyer Satish Chandra Mishra as the party's general secretary. The result of this wider appeal was that in the 2007 polls BSP candidates either won or came second in more than three-fourths of the seats the party contested. The government completed its full five-year term, with Mayawati as chief minister.

The BSP's administration, however, became known for corruption, unabashed self-aggrandizement (including the installation of hundreds of statues of Mayawati and other BSP figures throughout the state), and a number of financial scandals. Those issues led to the BSP's downfall in the 2012 state assembly elections. The party managed to win only 80 seats and was forced to leave office, and a humiliated Mayawati withdrew briefly from political activity. She returned quickly, however, with aspirations for higher office.

The BSP has also been a force in national politics. It has had a generally small but influential number of members in both the Lok Sabha (lower chamber of the Indian parliament) and the Rajya Sabha (upper chamber). As a rule, the party has avoided alliances with other political parties or groupings at the national level, with a few exceptions for brief periods (e.g., with the Samajwadi Party in 1993). It has been more inclined to support but not join coalitions, as it did in 2009, when its 21 members in the Lok Sabha allowed the United Progressive Alliance (led by the Indian National Congress) to attain a majority in that chamber and form a government. In the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, however, the BSP failed to win a single seat.