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ROLE OF YATRA IN INDIAN POLITICS

Focusing on the History of Lal Krishna Advani Rath Yatra & Role behind the making of Bharat Jodo Yatra

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Abstract

Indian Politics Witnessed many changes from the era of 1970s we saw the first non congress government in India but behind the era of 80s & 90s the Indian politics saw a change in the dimension of its roots now politicians were challenged by Marches or Yatra commonly known among the masses. The Bharat Yatra led by Former Prime Minister Chandrashekar brings the momentum in his political journey after that in the era of 90s Ram Rath Yatra led by Lal Krishan Advani brings BJP on the Right track in Lok Sabha Elections through which BJP gain Power and in 2024 Lok Sabha Elections how Ram Mandir is playing a pivotal role is in front of the Intellectuals to counter the lost space INC also started its Yatra famously known as Bharat Jodo Yatra & now to have a focus on 2024 Lok Sabha Elections Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is gaining Momentum. Ram Rath Yatra gained focus on Hindutva Politics; it gave rise to the emergence of Hindu Nationalism & helped in changing the ethnic definition of the Nation. This Paper will analyse the role of ram rath yatra in the decade & its results & also finds out the INC yatra role in political communication & how far they have collected the opportunity to meet with the voters in substantive manner. The overall purpose of the paper is to find out about the changing nature of politics through Yatras as a tool for political communication.

Introduction

Indian Politics & its large roots are present in the minds of people because they only remember those things which impacted them if we look at the archives so padyatra has a very important role in Indian Independence struggle but after independence Indian Politics saw emergence of Yatra in the late 70s period & during the 80s & 90s the period saw a rise in changing political discourse & still today the impact of those yatras existed. The JP Movement was a historic movement that gave rise to the involvement of students in politics and paved a new way of definition of socialism among the masses by the rise of leaders like Lalu Prasad Yadav in Bihar. The JP movement was the starting of change in Indian Politics. The JP gave the call for Total

Revolution in the country by which Youth gets attracted not only youth but academia & press responded to this call. In a Democratic society of India people again realises the role of their power the result was the thrown out of Indra Government in the elections. The JP Movement changed the politics of India. He wanted radical change in India & Total revolution was the way for his idea because he believes that India has only gained political freedom still today the economic and social freedom is left. Ultimately the idea of Total Revolution can be called Total Freedom but the irony today is that most of the leaders that were in the JP Movement are facing corruption charges they have a huge role in power politics and criminalization of politics. The another aim of the JP Movement was to spread the message among the masses that politico-economic institutions are supposed to regulate the distribution of resources for the well being of community because JP was always against the western concept of Industrialization & Individualisation, he supports the agro based people economy but one of the important point which we have to learn from JP is he believes that “Hindu Communalism” is more harmful than all types of communalism & he also believes that identification of India as a Hindu Nation may lead to national disintegration of other communities even he did not like the idea of RSS as a Hindu Nation. The Ram Rath Yatra was a different yatra because the whole aim for the yatra was to make the Lord Ram Temple at Ayodhya on the site where the Babri Masjid existed. The whole concept of the yatra was related to the Hindu Movement. In 2022-23 The Bharat Jodo Yatra which was started by INC has an aim to make congress roots stronger in the politics of India & to raise question on the government regarding their policies & the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is also focusing on the issues that existed in society & to raise their voice against the social audit of politics even at exclusionary politics.

Role Played by Organisations in the Large Scale Movements

The Ram Rath Yatra whose idea was given by Vinay Katiyar & under the leadership of former BJP Minister Lal Krishna Advani the yatra was started from Somnath temple in Gujarat & the final point of the yatra was Ayodhya the place of Lord Ram according to Hinduism. The whole movement was led by the party known as BJP but some organisations were also helping the yatra these were RSS, VHP & other dals such as Bajrang Dal during that time. The organisation such as VHP, Bajrang Dal played a huge role in Marches and Movements. I will focus on the movements and talk about the role of the Groups & organisations.

1.) **THE JP MOVEMENT OF TOTAL REVOLUTION.**

In the JP Movement RSS has a strong role. It is true that JP has invited the RSS Members in 1974 to join the movement because at that time RSS was a well established organisation and

JP did not have its own organisation now the point here is very important to understand that the role of RSS in JP was for Purpose oriented only because there were ideological conflicts between JP & RSS. In politics we have to understand that political relations & personal relations had a drift during the early years of Indian politics. The leaders have ideological conflicts even the personal relation of JP with other leaders of RSS was not bitter & because of this RSS proved helpful to JP in his Movement. The RSS Chief Balasaheb Deoras backed the JP movement even JP has a pivotal role in making of the BJP because the political wing of the RSS was BJS [BHARTIYA JAN SANGH] & in 1974 JP has an important role in bringing Jan Sangh in Politics of India. The BJS converted to the BJP in 1984 known as Bharatiya Janata Party.

Politics is a game where a move makes a bold step in the history & also in the future of India if we look at the broader perspective so the JP Movement is the biggest factor for bringing change in the India Politics because the Congress, Communists & socialist groups consider the Introduction of BJS (BHARTIYA JAN SANGH) & RSS into JP movement as a biggest blunder in the history. The close associates who were with JP have advised him to stay away from RSS but he didn't & through the help of JP the Jan Sangh joined the Janta Party this provided RSS a political platform for its ideology of Hindu Nation & the Ram Rath Yatra was a part of the RSS to bring the idea of Hindu Movement because the whole yatra has a motive to awake Hindus.

The role of Organisation RSS in the JP movement brings a change in the political atmosphere of India & this proved to be disastrous for the party such as INC & other communist groups. JP has invited Jyoti Basu to join his movement even he also assured on the automatic excision of the RSS people from its movement and Jyoti Basu helped JP by organising rallies for JP in Calcutta but due to the large numbers of people involved with RSS the CPI (M) under the General Secretary Jyoti Basu stayed away from the movement.

2.) THE RAM RATH YATRA FROM GUJARAT TO AYODHYA

The Ram Rath Yatra idea was given by Vinay Katiyar & organisations including VHP known as Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal & RSS famously known as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh helped the BJP in the yatra. The whole idea of these yatras was to give rise to the Hindu Nationalism, Pilgrimage & Sacred Geography. It is important to understand that Geography of sacred sites mapped out the sacred lands & this whole idea gave birth to the extension of Hindu Civilization, this whole belief tries to question the ethnic definition of the Nation. The Groups

such as RSS have their definition of India as a Hindu Nation so this whole idea was an opportunity to mobilise public support & also in reshaping the political beliefs & practices.

YATRA THAT SHAPED THE POLITICS OF INDIA

1.) BHARAT YATRA

Name of Yatra	BHARAT YATRA
Organised By	JANTA PARTY
Mode of Yatra	ON FOOT
Distance Covered By Yatra	4,260 KM
Leadership in Yatra	FORMER PRIME MINISTER CHANDRASHEKHAR
Total Centres in Yatra	15 BHARAT YATRA CENTRES

The Bharat Yatra was a padyatra which was started by the former prime minister of India Chandrashekhara who was a member of JANTA PARTY in 1983 in the 1980 LOK SABHA election. Indira Gandhi won the elections & became the PM of India during the time Chandrashekhara started the yatra he travelled nearly 4,260 KM in a time span of six months. The Yatra was started from Kanyakumari & ended in Delhi on 25 June 1983, through the yatra Chandrashekhara earned the title of "THE MARATHON MAN" his yatra focuses on the issues within the states & to make his party grip stronger 15 Bharat Yatra centres were made in the different states of India including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana & Uttar Pradesh. The Yatra was successful in bringing the connection between the party and the citizens.



Image: Former Prime Minister of India Chandrashekhar

Source: THE HINDU

2.) SANDESH YATRA

Name of the Yatra	SANDESH YATRA
Organised by	INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
Mode of Yatra	TRIP
Leadership	FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA RAJIV GANDHI
Places that Yatra Covered	MUMBAI, KASHMIR, KANYAKUMARI & NORTH-EAST

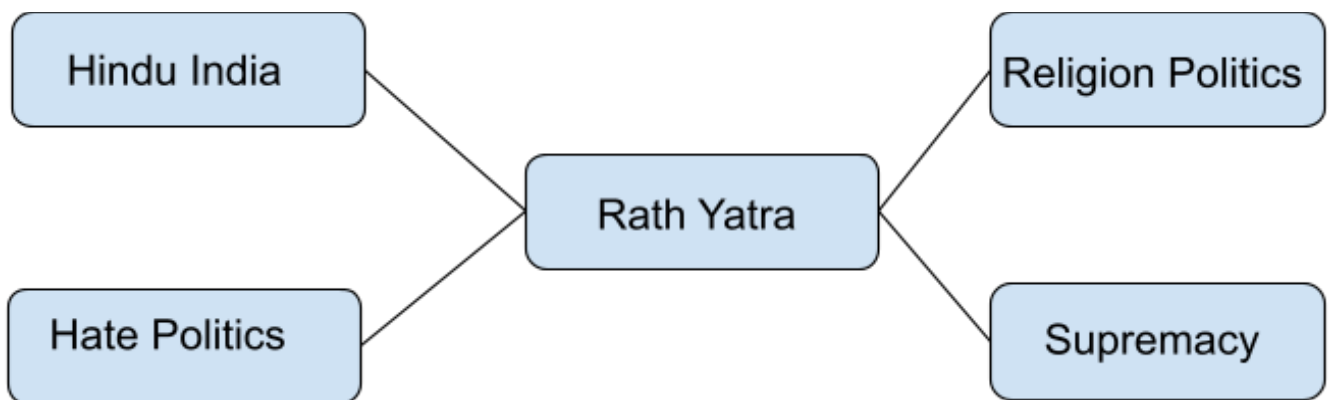
The Sandesh Yatra was announced by the former Prime Minister of India Rajiv Gandhi in 1985 at that time Rajiv Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India & the INC president. The yatra carries out four trips.

Rajiv Gandhi also started the “Sadbhavna Yatra” in 1990 on October 19 the yatra was started from Hyderabad it also focuses on political change in India.

3.) RAM RATH YATRA

The Ram Rath Yatra was the turning point in the history of Independent India because it gave rise to various issues in India & the very interesting fact for this yatra was the history behind its starting.

Issues that Ram Rath Yatra gave birth are:



I have Presented some issues that I found has a relation with the yatra because the aim of the yatra was to make the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya but this aim has also given rise to other issues that are mentioned above.

If we look at the History behind the starting of the Yatra so there can be various reasons behind the yatra the main reason given by the right wing leaders is that they wanna to built the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya but there is a statement of Former BJP minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Government “George Fernandes” he clearly spoke in a public gathering that when in 1990 VP singh tabled the Mandal Commission report so L.K. Advani spoke to George that now he has no other option left; rather than bringing the Ram temple issue in Politics & this whole start the concept of Ram Rath Yatra.

The Concept here is simple: Mandal Brings the issue of caste driven politics and by bringing the ram movement in politics the whole system comes under the shadow of one word that will define identity which is Hindu. By the Hindu Idea of politics the BJP will make its roots stronger & will also take appeasement from the citizens to be as a Hindu Party.

So, the whole yatra takes your notice to the point of the idea of Hindu India because the organisations who were supporting the Rath Yatra have the ideology to make India a Hindu Nation. The Yatra was started from the Somnath temple the location of the yatra from its

starting also reflects a civilizational concept. The Somnath temple was destroyed by Md Ghazni but in 1951 it was again rebuilt & Dr. Rajendra Prasad was invited for the inauguration of the temple; According to the people who joined the yatra Babur demolished the Ram Temple and made Babri masjid so now again it is a

question of a civilization not of a temple & Advani along with other minister has speak about this in their speeches.

The Ram Rath Yatra gave rise to the ethnic definition of a Nation & the slogans were used in the yatra such as “Baccha Baccha Ram ka mandir wahi banega” Leaders such as Uma Bharti & others try to introduce the communal angle by raising the question of Hindu Identity. This Yatra is a clear example of reshaping of traditions by political entrepreneurs. The Yatra gave rise to the Hindu Nationalism & ideological charter of Hindutva; a question of who is Hindu because the people who were not supporting the yatra were being targeted as Anti-Hindu among the masses because the narrative power makes them think who is Hindu or who is not a Hindu.

A new wave of

Nationalism started Hindu Nationalists define the national territory on the basis of Tirthas& through mass mobilisation the idea started the yatra went through 600 villages this yatra brings massive activism in the mind of individuals a example is seen in the city Ahmedabad where a man tilak advani with his blood. People were welcoming the yatra with trishuls & in Maharashtra Bal Thackeray Shiv Sena gave a momentum in yatra. In some states BJP grew up as a party that brings their identity back in rajasthan in city of Ajmer the yatra was welcomed at 2 AM with a massive crowds but Advani was arrested in Samastipur in Bihar & a battle started between the identities that are we Hindu as a single identity or are we divided on the basis of quota system by the yatra Hindu Nationalists developed a strategy of political pilgrimage to mobilise the masses & manipulating them through religious symbol that carry an emotional attachment to them, Kulkarni has quoted that Yatra politics is a perfect attempt to create a nationalist sentiment among the minds of people through manipulation of religious feelings and women were taking much part in the yatra because generally they were busy in the domestic sphere but this movement provide them a way to come out on streets for their Lord.

How Yatra gave rise to the supremacy and hate politics is important to understand. To deliver the idea of Hindu India a divide has to be created among the communities & how the hate against one community is shown clearly reflects how the divide is working because hate politics is used to bring the idea of a one community nation or to hold political roots strong apart from hate politics generally it has been seen that whenever questions were asked regarding the development & other things like how much work has been done in particular sector so a

religious angle is given while portraying the answer even leaders like Pragya thakur gave statements supporting Nathuram Godse & answer the question by raising slogan “Jai Shree Ram”. This whole debate gave rise to the concept of supremacy among the political roots like one party domination over the identity of one community. The Rath Yatra gave rise to the Hindu politics & after 2014 to upcoming 2024 within the phase of 10 years the BJP is using their idea of Hindu centric party & the narrative during the elections time supports BJP this brings the concept of supremacy.

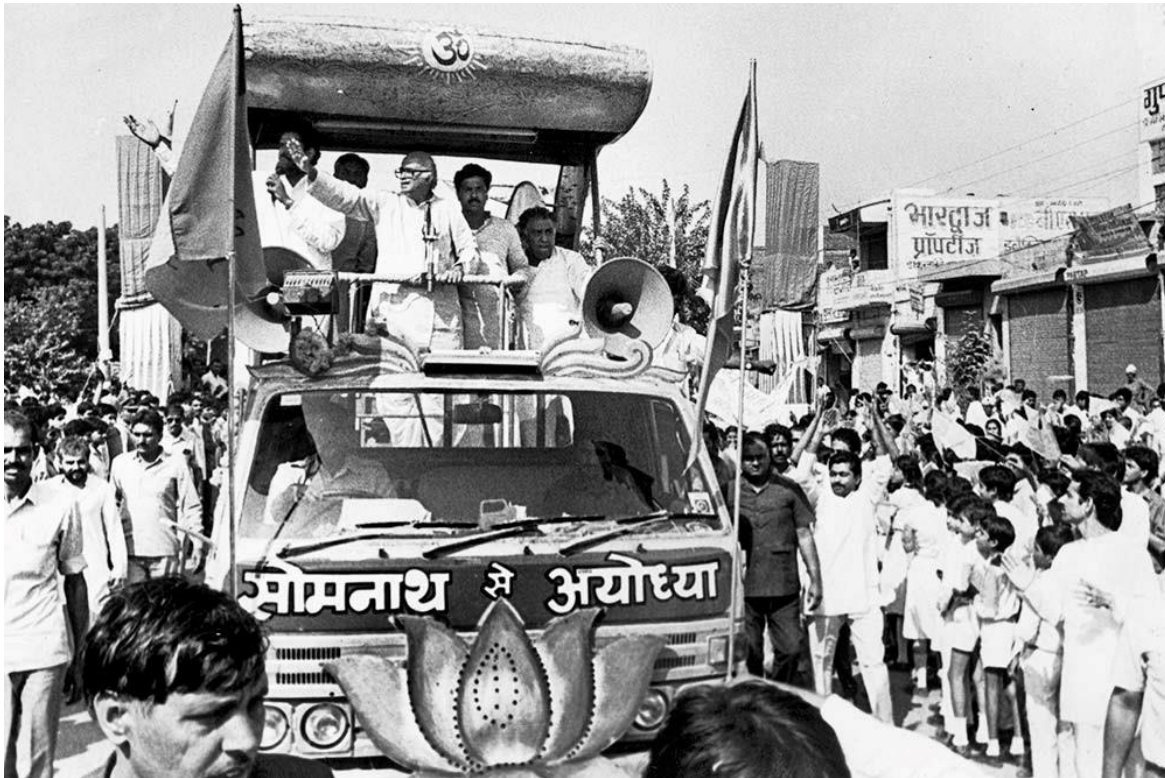


Image:LalKrishanAdvaniraisinghishand.

Source:OutLookIndia

It is important to understand that was the response given to the Ram Rath Yatra was a sudden huge response or any other attempts has been taken by the organisation before the Ram Rath Yatra because generally a mass support is not shown by the masses to any march until they don't know the exact knowledge of what is the motive behind it.

4.) THE EKATMATA YATRA

This Yatra was a method to raise the symbol of National Unity as a Hindu Civilization the model was practised in 1983. The VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad) started this yatra to start the march of unity from three High Places of Hindu Civilization.

Northern Cortege	Kathmandu to Rameshwaram
Eastern Cortege	Gangasagar in bengal to somnath

Northwestern cortege	Haridwar to Kanyakumari
Started by	VHP, Acharya Giriraj Kishore

The Yatra was to instrument the Hindu symbols & practices for the purpose of nationalist mobilisation. Thousands of bottles of Holy River Ganga water were sold along with the picture of Bharat Mata in all the way of the yatra. The Yatra inaugurated a new brand of ethno-religious social engineering.

After the success of Ram Rath Yatra BJP tried to cover its political benefits through other yatras such as Ekta Yatra, Janadesh yatra, suraj rath yatra, Rashtra bhakti hi teerth yatra, the suraksha yatra.

● THE EKTA YATRA

The Ram Rath Yatra was a huge successful campaign for the BJP now to make their roots strong they want to put a larger impact on the southern states and the ekta yatra seems an important turnpoint for them. Murli Manohar Joshi, BJP president in 1991 organised an Ekta Yatra from Kanyakumari to Srinagar. He raised the Indian Flag to demonstrate Kashmir's attachment to Bharat Mata. [source: X{Indianhistorypics}]



● JANADESH YATRA

The Janadesh Yatra was started by Lal Krishan Advani against the laws which were the constitution 80th Amendment Bill & The Representation of People Amendment Bill as per BJP these bills were for the dual purpose of banning religion from public life. The Janadesh Yatra was started with the purpose of seeking public mandate against these two bills. The four yatra started on 11 September 1993, the yatra started from the four corners of the country, the yatra covered 14 states and two union territories & at Bhopal the yatra congregated.

First Corner of country	Started from Jammu and Kashmir	Led by Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat
Second corner of country	Started from Porbandar in Gujarat	Led by Shri Murli Manohar Joshi
Third corner of country	Started from Mysore	Led by Shri Lal Krishan Advani
Fourth corner of country	Started from Calcutta in west bengal	Led by Shri Kalyan singh

● SURAJ RATH YATRA, RASHTRA BHAKTI HI TEERTH YATRA, BHARAT UDAY YATRA & SURAKSHA YATRA.

These Yatras were started by Lal Krishan Advani for the political reasons The Suraksha Yatra was in 2006 it was a way to do protest against the government powerlessness in the face of Jihadists attack but all of these yatras were not highly successful as the Ram Rath Yatra. Advani thought that always yatra helps in getting a boom in the political sphere is not true because all of these yatras did not help Advani much. Through these yatras Advani Party BJP makes their roots strong in other states & Advani became the biggest face of BJP & NDA alliance to hold its grip strong Advani took a last step in 2004 during elections which was the Bharat Uday Yatra to show the work of Atal Government in the following years (1999-2004) after the yatra image of advani gets stronger because in the BJP after Atal Bihari Vajpayee only Lal Krishan Advani is the bigger face. Despite the Bharat Uday Yatra UPA-1 made the Government & Dr. Manmohan Singh became the Prime Minister of India.

Over the years Indian Politics saw the yatra that shaped the politics of India but in the states of India including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar & Rajasthan Marches were being carried out by the Ministers for the betterment of the State.

Andhra Pradesh	YSR Padayatra in 2003
Andhra Pradesh	Praja Sankalp Yatra by YSR M. Reddy
Bihar	Jan Suraj Yatra by Prashant Kishor
Rajasthan	Jan Sangharsh Yatra by Sachin Pilot
Madhya Pradesh	Narmada Parikrama Yatra in 2017

These were the yatras that were done in various states to raise states issues but the political impact is created through the large yatra after the BJP rule in 2014 & 2019 the INC was not in the good position to fight with the BJP to make their roots stronger INC came the idea of Yatra

after a long time in Indian Politics. A large Yatra is planned among the masses this yatra was INC “BHARAT JODO YATRA”.

5.) BHARAT JODO YATRA

Bharat Jodo Yatra was a bigger political move taken by the Indian National Congress. This yatra was taken to bring back INC stronger in the Indian political dynamics and make the image of Rahul Gandhi stronger. The yatra covered 12 states & 2 union territories from Kanyakumari to Srinagar. (sourceofbelowimage:THEWIRE)

Name of the Yatra	BHARAT JODO YATRA
Total no of Days	145 DAYS
Organised by	INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
Led by	SHRI RAHUL GANDHI
Distance covered	4,000 KM
Mode of Yatra	FOOT
When was yatra started	SEPTEMBER 2022 TO JANUARY 2023



From the starting of 2019 elections INC saw a downfall in their political journey after the loss in the 2019 lok sabha elections the image of Rahul Gandhi in the general masses was not strong; Rahul Gandhi political journey and INC image in general was going through the multiple crisis at every certain ladder in multiple states there was an acute leadership crisis. The BJP became successful in portraying the image of Rahul Gandhi as “PAPPU” & Rahul Baba as the highly

upper class kid who is enjoying the benefits from his childhood. The Bharat Jodo Yatra was a successful pivotal turn to clean the image of Rahul Gandhi & bringing the INC back on the political pitch. Through the yatra a message was spread among the masses that what modi regime has done till now is hate among the communities battle between Hindu vs Muslim & this idea was spread on a large level by the slogan “Nafrat Ke Bazaar Mein Mohabbat Ki Dukan”. The idea of INC through the yatra was to propagate an inclusive society, a socio-cultural idea of India. The Yatra results in securing the southern seats for INC in the states of Karnataka & Telangana even in the state of Himachal Pradesh INC won. Through the whole journey of Yatra Rahul Gandhi touched upon the idea of Unity & the chief aim of the INC is to attain Unity & inclusive society rather than electoral gains. Through the speeches of Rahul Gandhi a message was spread that communal politics, Inflation & unemployment are the core issues & to work on them is the need of an hour, he also raised questions on the country's diversity, rights of the minority, rights of women & a threat to Indian Constitution. The Bharat Jodo Yatra was successful in destroying the image of Rahul Gandhi as “pappu” but the yatra built Rahul as a strong leader & within the Yatra the decision of making INC president turns successful that brings congress on the front of the political game.

6.) BHARAT JODO NYAY YATRA

The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is another step taken by INC to make a bold move for the upcoming Lok Sabha 2024 elections. After the ethnic violence in the state of manipur congress decided that it is the correct time to react & they started the yatra from the city of manipur. The Yatra will start from Manipur to Maharashtra capital Mumbai the yatra will be under the leadership of congress president Mallikarjun Kharge & Rahul Gandhi. From Imphal the yatra will cover the 14 states.

Name of Yatra	BHARAT JODO NYAY YATRA
Started By	INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS
Estimated Duration	OVER 2 MONTHS
Estimated Distance	6,200 KM
Mode	BUS TRAVEL AND FOOT DURING SOME PLACES
When the Yatra started	14 JANUARY 2023

As per the sources the Yatra will cover the 14 states namely; Manipur, Nagaland, Assam, Meghalaya, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chattisgarh, Uttar Pradeesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat & Maharashtra.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I just accounted the yatra & what message the yatra wanna to propagate a yatra for a political benefit can shape the upcoming political journey for different parties starting from the JP movement I took the account of ideological difference which gave rise to a new wave of politics which is Hindutva Politics started by the Jan Sangh, through the account of the yatra I took a ride of policies problems which yatra reflected while covering the Ram Rath Yatra I analyse the following outcomes that were seen the future which gave rise to the Hate politics & supremacy towards the concluding a point has been identified that is when political parties need support from the masses for their benefit they started the yatra but not everytime yatra helps parties to get more seats which we saw in the Advani Journey after doing so many yatra UPA-1 made the government in 2004 elections yatras only benefit the party when they need support but not every time taking support of the yatra helped them out. The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is beneficial for congress to make their political grip stronger because through the ram rath yatra BJP gained success and they are enjoying it today. The Yatra propagates new ideological beliefs starting from total revolution to Hindutva & recently to Unity everytime a new ideology make their party grip strong but ideology lasted for time and every decade a new ideology makes its rule & yatra proved a way to make them in power and we have saw this in JP movement then in Ram Rath Yatra.

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