A Case Study of the Educational and Socio-Economic Status of the Kattunayakan Community in Kerala

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Scheduled Tribes are the most backward people among the marginalized in Kerala. The main reason for their backwardness is their poor socio-economic status. Kattunayakan community is one among the five tribal groups who comes under Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Majority of the them live in Wayanad district of Kerala. They are mainly engaged in forest related activities for a living. They have good traditional skills but they lack employability skills demanded by the modern job market. Even today there are youngsters in Kattunayakan community who have not pursued education. Lack of education, motivation, and underutilization of funds for their development activities are some of the major reasons for their socio-economic backwardness which lead them to poverty. Since each tribe in Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups is highly heterogenous in nature. Separate holistic development plan should be formulated for their overall development.

Keywords : Scheduled Tribes; Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTVGs); Kattunayakan; Education; Employability; Socio-economic condition

Introduction

Scheduled Tribes (STs) are the most deprived among the marginalized people in India. According to the Census 2011, 8.6 per cent of India's total population is Scheduled Tribes. They are constitutionally protected to safeguard them from any kind of exploitation. They mostly live in the dense forests and that put a restriction on their access to hospitals, educational institutions and government offices. This isolated nature of the scheduled tribes is the major reason for their socio-economic backwardness. Since independence the education of Scheduled Tribes has been given importance. Several schemes and programmes have been introduced from time to time to eliminate their backwardness. Community Development Programmes, Primitive Tribal group, Integrated Tribal development project, Tribal sub plan, Dispensed Tribal Development Programme are some of the measures taken by the Indian government in various five-year plans for the development of Scheduled Tribes (Jayalakshmi and Pavithran, 2019).

As per Census 2011, there are 36 tribal communities in Kerala which are heterogeneous in nature. The trickling down of development activities to the tribes was not happening in the state (Ajitha, 2020). Scheduled Tribes are deprived of many things in life. One major reason for this is their poor socio-economic condition which results in poverty. In India for the overall development of STs, Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) was introduced in 1974. The main reason behind the introduction of the subplan was that the main stream development activities were not helping the Scheduled Tribe Communities to come out of poverty and resolve the deprivation issues that they were facing at many levels. Under TSP the state government allocates the fund which is more than proportional to the total tribal population of the state, which is 1.45 per cent. In her study Ajitha (2020) pointed out that there is under utilisation of TSP funds in the state. It is also seen that in some cases the fund is channelized for some other purposes. This calls for a more democratic way of implementing different programmes through TSP and giving all the required information to the concerned people through various media.

Another remarkable programme introduced by the Indian government through its five-year plan was the opening of Model Residential Schools for the tribal students in the country. As per the Report on Model Residential Schools (2019-20), there is a strong connection between educational development of Scheduled Tribes and their socio-economic condition. State governments accepted the programme and opened several Model Residential Schools in different districts. In such schools, tribal students get free education, accommodation and stipends which are important for the tribal students because they cannot afford their educational expenses. One of the major objectives for the starting of such schools was to make sure the enrollment of students in schools and to prepare them to integrate with the main stream society in future. Model Residential Schools play an important role in the overall development of Scheduled Tribe Students. Such schools help develop the skills of the tribal students, for example English communication skill. Also they give importance to tribal students' extra-curricular activities.

In our country skill development of the existing work force and the future work force is given importance. There is demand for skilled labourers not only in the national job market but also in the international job market. Hence skill development has policy implications. In the Economic survey 2022-23 it has been mentioned that the Government wants to eliminate the mismatch that exists between the demand and supply of the skilled manpower in the country. The government aims at upgrading the skills of the existing work force along with developing skills for the jobs that would be created in future. With the intention of upgrading the skills of the youth in the country, in 2014 Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) was established and in 2015 the Skill India Mission was launched. This indicates that the country really wants to reap the benefit that its skilled manpower can contribute to the development of the country. Moreover, the New Economic Policy, 2020 also gave emphasis to vocational education and skill development.

The Skill India Mission works through both short-term and long-term programmes. It focuses on skilling, re-skilling and up-skilling the citizens through various programmes. The skill development programmes implemented in India are Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojna, Rural Self-Employment Training Institutes, Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana and the National Urban Livelihood Mission. The schemes like Pradhan Mantri Kausahal Vikas Yojna, Jan Shikshan Sansthan (give priority to women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other backward sections of the society), National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme and Craftsmen Training Scheme are implemented by MSDE.

Based on the changes that are happening in this modern world the nature of the jobs is also changing and there is a demand for new skills or upgrading the existing skills. In this scenario in order to succeed in the job market one must develop a set of skills and they are cognitive skills, socio-emotional skills, technical skills, and digital skills (GoK, 2022). In India more than 62 per cent of the population falls in the working age group of 15-59 years and that is why the country is known as a young country in the world. Skill development can enhance employability and skilled labourers can contribute more to the economic growth of the country than unskilled labourers.

Skill development has been an important development agenda in Kerala. The evidence is the State Skill Development Mission. The Additional Skill Acquisition Programme (ASAP) - Kerala is an initiative by the Higher Education Department of the state. It focuses on improving the employability of students in higher education. Several online courses are provided through this initiative for students.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

In India the most backward tribes among the Scheduled Tribes are classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). In our country there are 75 tribal communities who come under PVTGs. The classification is based on the low level of literacy, declining or stagnant population, primitive technology used in agriculture, and economic backwardness of the tribes. Koraga, Cholanaickan, Kurumbar, Kadar, Kattunayakan are recognised as PVTGs in Kerala (KIRTADS, 2017).

As per the Socio-economic report on Scheduled Tribes in Kerala, Koragas are found only in Kasaragod district and the nearby area of Karnataka. Earlier they were treated as slaves and were sold to the landlords along with lands. They are experts in basketry and weaving. They collect forest products like bamboos and canes. Their sex ratio of males per females is 1000:1050. Cholanaickans are found only in Malappuram district. They have been living an isolated life in the dense tropical rain forest area in Malappuram. They consume and sell non timber forest products. They have the lowest sex ratio (males per females) among the Scheduled Tribes, which is 1000:834. Kurumbar are found in Palakkad district. They practice shifting cultivation, they collect non timber forest products, and they are experts in cattle rearing. They have a sex ratio of 1000:996 males per females. The Kadar community is distributed in Palakkad and Thrissur districts, they are also found in Kozhikode district. They engage in forest related activities for living and they collect non timber forest products. Their social and economic life was affected by the hydroelectric and irrigation projects and they had to move to resettlement areas. Tourism is another threat to their social life. Their sex ratio of males per females is 1000: 1041. Kattunayakans are found in Wayanad, Kozhikode, Palakkad, Malappuram districts in Kerala, they are also found in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Their sex ratio is1000: 1009 males per females. Table 1 shows the population of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Kerala.

Table 1: Per centage of population of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Kerala calculated from Census data

Tribes	Total population	Percentage of total population	Rural	Percentage of rural population	Urban	Percentage of urban population
Kadar, Wayanad Kadar	2949	11.59	2763	11.70	186	10.18
Kattunayakan	18199	71.54	17476	74.01	723	39.57
Koraga	1582	6.23	951	4.03	631	34.54
Kurumbar	2586	10.17	2303	9.75	283	15.49
Cholanaickan	124	0.49	120	0.51	4	0.00
Grand Total	25440	100	23613	100	1827	100

Source: Government of India, Census 2011

In the census data the population of Kadar and Wayanad Kadar were not given separately and Wayanad Kadar are not recognized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group by the Indian government. As per table 1, it is evident that among the PVTGs, Kattunayakan community has the highest population. Also, Kattunayakan community has the highest number of people living in both rural and urban areas when compared to other tribal communities among the PVTGs. Cholanaickan is the smallest tribal group in PVTGs. This is the tribal group which has the least number of people living in urban area. Among PVTGs, the number of people living in rural area is greater than that of the number of people living in urban area.

Kattunayakan Community in Kerala

The literal meaning of Kattunayakan/Kattunaickan is 'Lord of Forests' and they prefer to live in forest region. Therefore, their main source of income is from forest related activities. They speak a language which is identical to Kannada and they can speak in Malayalam with outsiders. Kattunayakan is the largest population in Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in the state. They constitute 4.69 per cent of the total Scheduled Tribes in Kerala (GoK, 2013). They are mostly found in Wayanad district. There are 4369 Kattunayakan families in the district. Table 2 shows the distribution of Kattunayakan population in different districts of Kerala.

Table 2: Distribution of Kattunayakan population in different districts of Kerala

District	Families	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
Idukki	1	1	3	4	0.02
Palakkad	218	395	392	787	3.94
Malappuram	517	1018	1016	2034	10.17
Kozhikode	32	52	67	119	0.59
Wayanad	4369	8487	8564	17051	55.28
Total	**5137**	**9953**	**10042**	**19995**	**100**

Source: Government of Kerala, Scheduled Tribes of Kerala, Report on the Socio-economic Status, 2013

Their main activities are gathering of food and collection of non wood forest produces. Though they do not own farm lands, they work as agricultural labourers and forest labourers. There are also small-scale cultivators in the community. They have good traditional skill in honey collecting. Earlier they did not own property or house because they led a nomadic life (Kakkoth, 2005).

Manoj (2018) reported that every year government spends crores of rupees for the development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in Wayanad district, but they have not achieved a positive outcome out of this spending. There are still many tribal families in PVTGs who live in absolute poverty. In her study Nalinam (2019) found that people in Kattunayakan community are deprived of nutrition. They face issues like malnutrition, lack of electricity, clean drinking water, lack of proper sanitation etc. Most of the people in the community have house with mud floor and they lack assets. All these indicate the severity of poverty of Kattunayakan community in Wayanad district. For overall development of the PVTGs the central government had implemented a comprehensive project during the period 2011-12 to 2014-15. Out of this project the government had spent 80.7 crores of rupees for the development of Kattunayakan Community but this did not change their poor condition, many are still homeless or live in poor shelter without any facility. In the year 2021 Sruthi Raj, who hails from Wayanad district became the first Bachelor of Technology degree holder from the Kattunayakan community (Modak, 2021). It was difficult for her to follow the subjects in college. Therefore, she pursued special classes and cleared the exams on her third attempt. Her parents work for daily wages.

As per the Socio-economic report (2013) the sex ratio of Kattunayakan community is 1000:1009, which means females outnumbers males in the community. Among PVTGs Katattunayakan has the highest literacy rate and it is 59.37 per cent which is much below the state literacy rate whereas the Cholanaickan has the literacy rate of 39.63 per cent which is the lowest among the Scheduled Tribe communities in Kerala. As per the report, population of Kattunayakan community above five years was 17436. Their educational attainment shows that out of a total of 17436, the number of people below SSLC level of education was 8857; 515 attained SSLC and 234 attained Pre-degree or Plus-two level of education.Only16 among them completed Graduation and 5 Post-graduation. There were also 38 Diploma and certificate holders.

Another notable feature of education of the Kattunayakan community is that it has the highest number of dropouts in PVTGs (GoK, 2013). Majority of the students, discontinue their education at the secondary level itself. The major reasons for this are poverty, failure, sense of alienation and family problems. Problems that hinder the educational development of tribals in Wayanad district (Gafoor and Madhu, 2008) are poor economic condition; language problem; alcoholism among parents; hereditary and communicable diseases; lack of awareness about the opportunities in surroundings due to lack of mass-media; child labour; assisting parents in their occupation; poor infrastructure facility at home; inadequacy of government aid; inferiority complex; living in the forest area; superstitions; irrelevant curriculum to their life style; insufficiency of schools; lack of adequate attention from teachers; pathetic condition at hostels; family clash; early marriage;

less opportunity for higher education due to lack of money, proper guidance and study materials. Illiteracy of parents is also a problem for their educational development. Illiterate parents are not bothered about the education of their children and they are not aware of what their children can achieve in future if they are educated.

Employability Skills and Education

According to Hillage and Pollard (1998), individuals' employability consists of the knowledge, skills, and attitude they possess and how they use them to potential employers and the context in which they seek work. According to Harvey (2001), educational institutions can help students to attain employability through good learning. He also stated that for students, employability is about developing a set of attributes and abilities which are required to acquire job.Gowsalya and Ashok Kumar (2017) stated that the employability skills which need to be inculcated in graduates are communication, listening and learning, basic numeracy, time management, creativity, computer knowledge, organizing and thinking skills, team work, problem solving, work ethics, leadership skills, management skills and self-management skills. Bhola and Dhanawade (2012) are of the opinion that scarcity of employability skills originates from the education system, insufficiency of infrastructure in educational institutions can challenge employability of its students. Higher education and employability skills are closely related and in this globalized and modern world, employers prefer to hire skilled labourers. As Adam Smith had rightly said, skilled labourers can save time and their labour productivity will be higher than that of the unskilled labourers. There is no wonder why all over the world the employability of students and that of existing workers are gaining importance.

According to Suresh and Rajasenan (2015), educational attainment is very important for Scheduled Tribes. The major tribal groups in Wayanad district are Paniyan, Adiyan, Kurichian, Kurumans, Kattunayakan, and Kadar. Most of them have attained below primary level of education and only a few have attained higher education. Educational attainment, employment and skill development are the contributing factors of human capital formation of Scheduled Tribes. They stated that educational backwardness of tribals is directly connected to their poverty. According to Prashobha (2017), there is a wide gap between the skills and education acquired by the tribals and that of modern economy and they are yet to explore the house hold industrial sector.

Research Problem

The socio-economic condition of Kattunayakan community is comparatively better than the other groups in PVTGs but as per various reports, there are many people in the group who live in absolute poverty and lead an alienated life. Their low educational attainment and traditional job skills help them to get only daily wage jobs with low income which is not sufficient to end their poverty. Though Kattunayakan community has the highest population, highest number of people living in urban area, and highest literacy rate among PVTGs, only very few have attained graduation and post-graduation. Generally, more Scheduled Tribe students opt for arts subjects than science subjects for pursuing higher education and prefer to study in government educational institutions. As per the Economic Review 2021, the total number of Scheduled Tribe students doing BA was 3336 whereas only 1025 tribal students were doing BSc course. 895 tribal students were doing BCom. In Post-graduation, 976 tribal students went for MA courses, 753 for MSc courses, and 373 for MCom course. The above situation compels us to go for a case study to investigate the socio-economic status and educational attainment of Kattunayakan community.

Research Questions

The study is based on the following research questions:

1.   What is the socio-economic status of the student?

2.   Can education eliminate the sense of alienation of the student?

3.   Is education helping the student to develop employability skills?

Objectives

1. To understand the socio-economic condition of the student who belongs to Kattunayakan community

2. To understand educational attainment of the student including employability skills.

Methodology

This paper is based on a single case study. The required information for the study was gathered from the student through direct interview and observation. Secondary data from Census of India 2011, Report on Socio-economic status of Scheduled Tribes in Kerala- 2013, and Economic Review were also used. The adoption of case study method is based on the relevance of an in-depth investigation, in the context of lived experiences. The informant was selected based on the place where she lives, the subject she is studying for graduation, and the type of college where she studies.

Socio-economic Status of the Student

This is the case study of a girl who belongs to Kattunayakan community. She lives with her father, mother, and two younger sisters in a tribal colony in Wayanad district of Kerala. They live in the house provided by the Panchayat in rural area with bare minimum facilities. Her parents have attained education up to primary level. Both are coolie workers and each of them earn on an average of 2000 rupees per month, which is the only source of income of the family. They do not own any farm land or vehicle. Her parents have incurred around 25000 rupees of liability. Even though her parents are not much educated they understand the importance of education and all the benefits it can bring to them. Therefore, her parents encourage her and her younger sisters to pursue education so that they can get a good job in future which will help to enhance their economic condition. Moreover, they do not want their children to end up like them as coolie workers.

She said, in the colony where she lives majority of the parents are not much educated. In fact, she has seen more uneducated parents than educated ones in her area. Generally, the people in the colony have the habit of consuming alcohol, in some cases that affects their family life. Also, in her community there are parents who want their children to pursue education and at the same time some parents do not promote their children to go to school. There are youngsters who are educated but unemployed. She felt that the rest of the society has started accepting the educated people of her community while uneducated people of the community are still living an alienated life. In her colony majority of the people have poor economic condition. According to her it will be good if both the parents work in each family. She firmly believes that education will enable them to interact with the rest of the society so that they will not be alienated anymore. She said because she is educated, she has not faced any kind of discrimination so far.

She wants the government to motivate the parents and children who belong to ST category mainly PVTG so that those children who are still hesitant to join educational institutions can come forward and pursue education. Parents and children should also be made more aware of the prospects of education, which courses their children can undertake and what are the job opportunities their children will get once they successfully complete education. She added that the government is trying to bring those children to school who are yet to join school and government should keep on trying or put more effort until all the students of Kattunayakan community join schools. Also, she wishes after finishing school they should go for higher studies. She considers education as a key factor for their socio-economic development.

Educational Attainment and Employability Skills

The informant of this case study is an under graduate student in Mathematics who studies in an aided college in Wayanad district. She did her lower primary education from the school which was around 2 kilometers away from her house. From upper primary to higher secondary, she had to travel around 16

kilometers to reach the school. During high school she was able to make use of *Gothrasarathi* bus service for Scheduled Tribe students, which made the journey to school easy. Her college is around 20 kilometers away from her house. Travelling is an issue for her because she leaves home around 7 am in the morning and reaches home around 6 pm in the evening.

She is a hardworking girl. She got admission for Degree course on merit and got the scholarship from the Tribal Development Department for her higher education. She was engaged in extracurricular activities like paper art and group dance in her schooldays and is an NSS volunteer.

Up to tenth standard she has studied in Malayalam medium. From plus two onwards she has started writing exams in English. She has faced issues in understanding English in the beginning but with the help of her teachers and friends she tackled the language issue. She can communicate well in Malayalam but she wants to improve her communication skill in English. Since she is an under-graduate in Mathematics, she has numeracy skills. Through the seminars, as part of her curriculum, she has improved her presentation skill. She said, "I always prepare well for the seminars by understanding the subject deeply, put my maximum effort to present it well and that is why I get positive remarks from my teachers and classmates''. She can work in a team as well as independently. She was a part of 'Each One Teach One' programme conducted by the Department of Mathematics of her college. As part of the programme she and her classmates went to a nearby school in Kattikulam and interacted with the children, taught them Mathematics. This helped her to choose a career for her future. Now she wants to become a teacher. She is confident that she can teach students well and her good presentation skill is an add on to it. She has developed skills like problem solving, planning and time management and can get along with students in other community in her class. She easily gets demotivated by negative comments and she needs to tackle this. She said she has very little knowledge in technology. She wants to improve her computer knowledge. According to her, education has played a major role in developing some employability skills in her and she is very confident that she can make use of these skills at workplace once she gets employed.

Conclusion

Education plays a major role in the development of Scheduled tribes in Kerala. The tribal people included in the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups have great traditional skills. Tribal resettlement has affected their socio-economic condition and many of them live in absolute poverty. Kattunayakan community is comparatively advanced among the communities in PVTGs. Education helps them to develop certain employability skills which are in demand now. Mainstream society accepts the educated tribal people than the uneducated ones and educational institutions are the place for them to mingle with students from different communities. Since the main characteristic of Scheduled Tribes is their poor socio-economic condition which force them to live in poverty, parents will send their children to schools and colleges only if their children get employment according to their education. In Kattunayakan community there are students who have attained secondary level education but are unemployed. This will demotivate other parents and they will not send their children to school. Another important measure is to make them aware of the development programmes formulated for them and its benefits through all possible ways. It is high time that government should make sure the allocated funds for tribal development is benefitting them without any delay or red tape issue. Like education, motivation also plays an important role in the development of the people who belong to Particularly Vulnerable Groups which includes Kattunayakan community. Since each tribe in Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups is highly heterogenous in nature separate holistic development plans should be formulated for their overall development.

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CONTENTS

Identity Politics: Problems and Solutions

Alok Tandon, *Living Together: Rethinking*
*Identity and Difference in Modern Context***, Akshaya Prakashan,**
New Delhi, 2023, xii + 152 pages, Rs. 300/-

Saurav Kumar Rai

The present book opens with a provocative yet age old question, 'How to live together while being different?' It critically examines the claims of various theoretical models/strategies suggested in this regard. Modernity, it was expected, would win over all kind of pre-modern identities thereby making culture specific differences secondary. However, prevalent practice of modernity, argues Tandon, creates a situation conducive to the assertion of traditional identities like caste, religion and ethnicity (p. viii). Related to this is the identity based politics and violence. It naturally led to conceptualisation of various strategies and models to tackle identity-based conundrum in modern times. The present book not only delineates these strategies/models but also discusses their shortcomings.

The book begins by defining 'identity' and its significance for an individual. According to Tandon, to have an identity gives a person a tangible sense of being at home in the world. Loosing one's identity makes one insecure, dispossessed of one's bearing, not knowing where one stands (p. 2). Here the author's primary focus is on 'social identity' which automatically creates difference, in the form of 'in-group' and 'out-group'. Since these identity groups, states Tandon, are in relation of power, they live in conflict and give rise to various responses, including identity politics (p. 8).

Chapter 2 critically evaluates views of Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser regarding the 'idea of recognition' integrally associated with the identity-politics. All three believe that, in contemporary politics, there is a shift away from ideas of class, equality, nation and economy towards ideas of identity, difference, culture and ethnicity. Subsequently, in Chapter 3, the author explores the interplay between modernity, culture and identity (pp. 9-26).

In Chapter 4, Tandon examines the darker side of identity viz. identity-based violence. Since awareness of one's identity, argues Tandon, is not possible without assuming the existence of the other with possibility of conflict. In fact, according to the author, formation of personal and group identity is not possible without conflicting with 'significant others'. In other words, identity and otherness are in reciprocal and dialectical relationship (p. 48).

Chapter 5 briefly explores identity based social movements such as feminist identity politics (pp. 57-58), gay and lesbian identity politics (pp. 58-59), race and ethnicity identity politics (59-60), caste identity politics (60-61), religious identity politics (pp. 61-63), and politics of national identity (pp. 63-65). Tandon also examines the advantages and dangers of such identity based politics. In the next chapter (i.e. Chapter 6), the author discusses in detail the religious and caste conflict specific to India and attempts to draw some conclusion to live peacefully.

Chapter 7 happens to be the most important chapter of the book wherein the author has critically examined various strategies/models for integration. These are: assimilationism, multiculturalism, interculturalism and transculturalism. While assimilationism mistakenly equates equality with uniformity,

multiculturalism in trying to protect individual culture undermines inter-cultural exchanges. Similarly, interculturalism while accepts dynamic intercultural exchanges, fails to overcome xenophobic nationalist narratives as well as racial and class-based solidarity. Tandon here favours transculturalism which besides advocating deculturalization of the past, emphasizes on reinventing of a new common culture based on the meeting and intermingling of different people and cultures (pp. 124-25).

In the end, Tandon critically looks at two latest publications on 'identity' and associated politics. First one is by the well-known author Francis Fukuyama entitled *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (2018) and the second one is by Kwame Anthony Appiah's *The Lies that Bind: Rethinking Identity* (2018). Tandon here rightly points out that a major paradox of any discussion on identity is that philosophers and social scientists are often very good at exposing the errors that lie behind identity claims, yet identities seem to acquire an inescapable hold on us (p. 137). Incidentally, Tandon goes beyond the frameworks offered by Fukuyama and Appiah and ends on a positive note invoking Stephen Nathanson and Isaiah Berlin.

The present book successfully offers a holistic view on identity and related issues such as identity-based social movement, politics and violence. It is a valuable and thought provoking to readers who want to not only acquaint themselves of various possible strategies to deal with the clash of identities, but also wants to look beyond them to find an answer to the identity based conundrum.

Spiritual Environmentalism and Environmental Movements in India

Julie John

The collaboration between spirituality and environmentalism is an important one in the field of environmental studies which is called 'spiritual environmentalism'. In India, it is popular to employ spirituality to advance the cause of environmental movements. Because religion has a strong cultural foundation in India, environmental campaigners hope to garner widespread public support through the use of religion with little additional work. However, there are occasions when this cannot provide a clear explanation for the issue, and people who do not adhere to a particular religious tradition may view it as a pointless argument. The excessive usage of religious symbols distances people from the actual cause of the problem - the degradation of the environment. The use of religion also limits the creation of a scientific temperament in society and keeps individuals imprisoned in myths and an illusory world where they cannot advance.

Pope Francis issued the encyclical, the highest degree to teaching material in the Catholic church, "Praised Be: On the Care of Our Common Home" on June 18, 2021, calling for the development of an "internal ecology" that unites several fields of study to ensure a sustainable future. In the 2000-year history of the Catholic church, this encyclical was the first to address environmental issues. The pope has advocated for an integral ecology that balances care for people and the environment. He makes it abundantly evident that environmental concerns cannot be limited to those of scientists, environmental organizations, or even just government institutions. He challenges everyone to recognize that these are complex environmental and societal issues that need multifaceted solutions beyond a "technocratic paradigm" that prioritizes a quick remedy. To combat ecological sin, he calls for ecological virtues. This is a time when ethics and the environment collide. He calls for a cultural revolution based on an eco-friendly lifestyle to prevent environmental degradation in Christianity and other religions (Outlook, 2022).

One of the major criticisms that Christianity faced was that it fostered a social climate that made the environment fragile. For instance, historian Lynn White Jr. stated in his 1967 article, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," that Western Christianity is responsible for the current environmental disaster. He says:

> *Christianity inherited from Judaism not only a concept of time as non-repetitive and linear but also a striking story of creation. By gradual stages, a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image (White, 1967).*

According to Lynn White, Christianity was responsible for freeing man from his dependence on nature and allowing him to exploit it for his advantage. For him, there is a negative correlation between Juedo-

Christian religiosity and pro-environmental attitudes and many studies have since supported this notion. Anthropocentric is a concept that believes man is the center of the universe and has spread by Semitic religions like Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Many researchers have found that organized religions can affect the cultural and ethical perspectives of their followers. This fosters a moral code that upholds the notion that environmental conservation is necessary. Religion plays a key part in developing people's attitudes towards environmental crises (Magar, 2020). This is crucial, and it contributes to the growth of a brand-new field of study called spiritual ecology.

The enormous population of India is both diversified and religious. India is not only home to most of the world's Hindus, Jains, and Sikhs; it also has one of the largest Muslim populations, as well as millions of Christians and Buddhists. India has a long history of environmental worship, such as the worship of sacred trees, worship of sacred groves, and the worship of sacred rivers. Vedic Hinduism considers nature as 'the body of God'. Different birds and animals are associated with different Gods and Goddesses. So they worshiped them and their protection and preservation was essential in their life (Arli&Esch, 2022).

The Hindus make up 79.8% of the Indian population. Hinduism is a polytheistic religion with a variety of beliefs and practices. Hinduism is the culmination of all these many national and regional cultures and traditions, including tribal beliefs and practices. Many of the customs have a strong connection to the survival and way of life of many communities. Therefore, these have a significant impact on the people. Buddhism and Jainism both promote the idea of Ahimsa (non-violence), while the Sikh religion believes that the natural world possesses heavenly aspects. In the same way, there are teachings about man's relationship with nature in every religion. But at the same time, there are a lot of things in the religions that are contradictory to that. For example, the Mahabharata, the Hindu epic states that Prakriti and Purusha are the two attributes that collectively make up every element of nature, including humans, and that they are undecaying, incomprehensible, and without beginning or end ((Vol. X, Santi Parva (Part III), CCCXV, 41). Here, Prakriti refers to the physical part, whereas Purusha is the spiritual aspect of existence in the natural world. Every living and non-living, human and non-human object of the earth contains the soul (Purusha) for their existence. The Mahabharata truly equates man with all other things in the universe when it talks about the all-pervasive aspects, such as Prakriti and Purusha, that live in all things (Magar, 2020). But in the same text, there was an incident where the God of Fire, Agni, asks Arjuna and Krishna for help in setting fire to the Khandava forest so that he might satisfy his appetite by eating the flesh and fat of the animals there. He set a fire in the forest and destroyed all the creatures there with Arjuna and Krishna's assistance. The Mahabharata itself demonstrates the paradox by at one point equating man with both living and non-living things in the forest and then glorifying the act of setting fire to the forest and killing every being that lives there (Mahabharata, 2014).

However, there are occasions in every religious text that it turns against itself by elevating actions that are harmful to the environment, placing an excessive emphasis on humans, or dividing man from their natural surroundings. But we can undoubtedly say that the ancient communities had less impact on the ecology not only because of the influence of religion but also due to their lifestyle and occupation which were mostly dependent on nature.

The Emergence of New Politics

Despite the fact that humans have been conscious of the environment's significance since ancient times, there were a lot of things that were damaging to the environment. But their effects have been most acutely felt during the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution led to radical changes in all sectors. This shook the foundation of the formerly existing rural economy. All the small farmers were forced to adopt capital-intensive and market-oriented methods because factories and urban areas had a huge demand for materials and products. Resources have been widely exploited. The colonial invasion of the world at that time caused these environmental problems to spread throughout the world. The centuries-long colonial rule and the massive exploitation of resources around the world destroyed the economic structure of most of the

countries. A large scale of products was manufactured in factories using advanced technologies and marketed worldwide using transport facilities. All small businesses collapsed. The world witnessed huge environmental impacts. With the development of information technology, people around the world have started to communicate with each other. Information and ideas were exchanged. At the same time, discussions turned to the search for more democratic and humanist ideas. Women, sexual minorities, blacks, the poor, and all of the lower strata of society began to raise their identity questions to society. Environmental movements also emerged as part of such debates. Environmental issues raised in developed countries are due to environmental concerns, but in third-world countries like India, it is part of the survival of people.

Ramachandra Guha, an Indian historian, who has done considerable research on environmentalism, says that most of the countries followed a similar history of environmentalism and modern environmentalism is the child of the 1960s. He says that environmentalism has two waves. The first was when the reaction emerged during the initial stage of industrialization and the second was when the intellectual responses were given shape and force by a groundswell of public support. The second wave of environmentalism is the wide-ranging acceptance of environmental issues by the second half of the 20th century. Ramachandra Guha called the second wave, the ecology of affluence, and this started with the publication of the book 'Silent Spring'. Earlier, environmental issues were only a matter of intellectual debate. But by the 1960s, it had garnered massive support (Guha, 2000).

New types of social movements emerged as part of a larger cultural shift that emerged in Europe between 1960 and 1970. According to Ronald Inglehart, an American social scientist, this was due to the emergence of post-materialism in Europe which is a value orientation that prioritizes self-expression and quality of life over economic and physical security. As a part of these changes, the central core of politics has shifted from class to something related to social and cultural issues like the environment, gender, and health, as opposed to pre existing class-based politics. The spread of higher education, a shift in occupational structure, and the development of mass communication networks are considered the reasons for this change. The rise of new social movements in modern society emerged as part of the new socio-political conditions in Western Europe in the late 1970s. In addition, two phenomenon appear to be significant:-

1. Following World War II, Western nations experienced economic stagnation for the first time in the 1950s and 1970s, following a long period of unprecedented prosperity.

2. Thirty years after World War II, the absence of total war in Western nations was cited for shifting values (Inglehart, 1977).

The transition from a traditional class-based society to a non-class society, modernism to postmodernism, industrialism to post-industrialism, and materialism to post-materialism have increased the state's and civil society's distance. They resulted in a new social class distinct from the existing political structure. The changing representation of society changed the social movements in different ways. New social movements arose in European and American societies in the 1960s and 1970s that were issue-oriented and were not based on class structure. It aimed to broaden democracy's scope by introducing new politics that addressed anti-racism, anti-nuclear disarmament, feminism, environmentalism, regionalism, ethnicity, civil liberty, personal freedom, space for discussion, and so on (Singh, 2001).

Indian Environmentalism-Environmental Justice Movements

The struggle against injustice and unequal resource distribution is what drives environmental movements in third-world nations like India, as opposed to the wealth and quest for self-actualization that drove them in Western societies. The Indian population can be divided into three classes based on their relationship with the environment such as omnivores, ecosystem people, and ecological refugees. Omnivores are those who can draw upon the natural resources of the whole of India to maintain their lifestyles; Ecosystem people are the section of people who rely on resources in their vicinity. Ecological refugees are the ecosystem people

who have been displaced from their homes and live in slums. The development in India is characterized by a basic asymmetry between the omnivores and ecosystem people. Omnivores are the people who consume more ecology and ecosystem people are the category who consume too little. This has many consequences, such as;

- Use of state machinery for diverting natural resources for omnivore prosperity, e.g., through subsidies

- The decision-making is concentrated in the hands of omnivores.

- Indifference of omnivores to environmental degradation caused by them and passing on their costs to society

- Protest by the victims of development

- Creation of 'ecological refugees' as a result of permanent displacement of ecosystem people

The three ways to enhance social power by ecological refugees and ecosystem people are land reforms, literacy, and health care. These would simultaneously force omnivores to internalize the costs of their profligate behaviour (Guha, 2003).

Spiritual Environmentalism in India

The majority of participants in Indian environmental movements are common people, in contrast to Western European environmental movements that are led by the Middle Class. Because they are the most affected by environmental degradation brought on by the exploitation of natural resources, industrialization, urbanization, pollution, developmental activities, and numerous other factors. In India, economic factors such as loss of livelihood, displacement, and health problems are caused by environmental degradation, injustice, and the unequal distribution of resources are factors that contribute to the rise of environmental struggles. *The majority of these,* however, are social and cultural movements in the West. However religious sentiments are one of the most significant social and cultural factors that support *environmental initiatives in India.* People are utilizing religious or spiritual impulses in numerous environmental campaigns in India to strengthen their fights. Sometimes, religious sentiments might be the driving force behind the development of a movement. Religious sentiments have a great impact on people in a country like India.

The collaboration between spirituality and environmentalism is an important one in the field of environmental studies which is called 'spiritual environmentalism'. The term "spiritual ecology" refers to the point when spirituality and the environment meet. Three categories of spiritual ecology exist; scientific and academic, which include researchers who explore the connections between religion, ecology, and environmentalism, but who are not necessarily religious or spiritual; the second is spiritually motivated environmentalism, which refers to environmentalism that is motivated and guided by spirituality; and the third group is environmentally motivated spirituality, those are the people who are driven by environmental concerns including those whose encounters with nature go beyond the realm of science and the material world (Gaia, 2023).

Even though environmental movements emerged after the Second World War in the West, even before, there were numerous movements fighting for the environment. But what motivated them may not be the preservation of nature but the existence, work, life crisis, rituals, and beliefs. One of the key elements that have contributed significantly to ecology in India is spirituality or religion. With so many religious ideals entrenched in a civilization like India, where life and faith are entwined, spiritual-environmentalism has a long history.

The Use of Spirituality in the Environmental Movements in India

The Bishnoi Movement, considered to be India's first environmental movement, was a spiritually-motivated one. Originating in the 1700s in the Khejarli, Marwar region, Rajasthan, this movement aimed to

stop the King of Jaipur's soldiers from cutting down the Khejiri trees, but the most motivating reason behind it was a spiritual master named Guru Maharaj Jambaji who instructed the Bishnoi community to protect the trees. About 363 villagers sacrificed their lives for the protection of those trees in the movement. The model of protest carried out by hugging trees has been modelled by many of the following environmental movements in India including the *Chipko Andolan*.

The Bishnoi movement occurred in the early 16th century when the world had not started to discuss environmental issues. The villagers' protest resulted in the protection of the trees, although this was not the movement's primary motivation. The tree was considered sacred by the residents of the area and it was related to their spirituality. So it is clear that the movement's foundations were spiritual, but it also had positive environmental effects. Such religious symbols have been widely used in many environmental movements in post-independence India. Chipko, for example, was one of the biggest environmental movements India has ever seen. The issue started in 1973 when the Forest Department was permitted to cut ash trees in the region to a sports goods manufacturing company and the same forest department rejected the request of a cooperative organization, to allot the ash trees to make agricultural implements to generate local employment. But the company couldn't cut the trees due to the protests of some organizations. Then the government auctioned 640 trees of the Adivasi Forest and 273 trees of the Salet Forest in the district headquarters in Naredranagar in October 1977 in the Hemvalghati region. People especially women in the region protested against this by tying rachis to the trees, which was a religious sign of commitment, and pledged to protect them (Doyle, 2005).

Inspired by *Chipko Andolan*, a movement called the *Appiko* movement emerged in the Uttara Kannada and Tioga districts of Karnataka, the southern state of India. *Appiko* means "embrace" or "hug" in Kannada, the local language of Karnataka. The movement occurred in the Kalase forest, part of the tropical forests of the Western Ghats in the 1980s (Rinehart, 2004). The problem arose when the government of Karnataka declared the forest districts as backward and implemented new projects in the area. Three factories, a pulp and paper mill, a plywood factory, and a chain of hydroelectric dams had been established in the area in the name of development. They began to exploit forests and 70% of the original forest has been decimated. In addition, the forest department began cutting trees to plant commercial trees like eucalyptus and teak and replaced broad-leaf trees. The villagers depend on trees for fuel, fodder, and manure become deprived. The rich fertile topsoil was washed away leaving less fertile laterite soil. The construction of dams submerged huge tracts of forest and agricultural areas and the lives of people (Taylor, 1995).

In Salkani village, in Uttara Kannada, one of the hill districts of Karnataka, in the early spring of every year, people from a small village gather and prepare food to offer their worship to the goddess. They called the forest 'Ammanavara Kadu', meaning the forest of the Goddess. When they gathered in April 1983, they were shocked to see a barren site instead of the forest which the forest department had cut down for the use of a plywood factory. The youth of the village decided to organize people against it. The environmental movements also originated in many areas of the country for spiritual reasons (Doyle, 2005).

Kerala is a progressive state in India in terms of education, political awareness, media circulation, literacy, etc. The state has achieved European-level living standards in many aspects of the Human Development Index. But like in all parts of India, there is a significant amount of nature worship and rituals related to the natural world. To prevent crop loss, animal abuse, disease, etc., the ancient people depended on agriculture and worshiped nature's powers, goddesses, mountain gods, and nagas (snakes). For this, a particular piece of land was set aside. As a naturally existing small forest, *kavus* preserves ecological balance by offering a natural habitat for numerous species of flora, fauna, and micro organisms. This is a storehouse for herbs. They nourish the water resources of the region and increase the oxygen content in the air. Numerous *kavus* in Kerala have been preserved by the people. In these locations, numerous rituals are still practised. Because of its association with religion, its conservation receives large public participation (Tomalin, 2002).

Since the very beginning, Kerala has shown a progressive stance towards issues related to the environment. Silent Valley was one of the major environmental movements in Kerala, and its methods and motivations were very different from the environmental movements that predominated in other parts of the country. The primary concern of the Silent Valley movement was the preservation of the forest and wildlife, particularly the lion-tailed macaque, an endangered species. This was a purely environmental concern, as opposed to issues associated with the human-related environmental issues addressed by the Chipko and other movements. Silent Valley was a multi-faceted environmental movement. Most crucially, it was a movement led by the educated middle class rather than something that originated from the bottom of society like *Chipko*. Beyond strikes and protests, many strategies were employed in this movement, including gaining public support through campaigns, exerting political pressure, raising the issue to an international level, and battling through legal means (Warrier, 2018). Later, however, several movements emerged in Kerala that focused on human-related environmental issues, including the Western Ghat Protection movement, the anti-waste plant movement in Vilappilshala, the anti-endosulfan movement in Kasaragod, the strike against the Mavoor Gwalior Rayons factory, etc. Most of them have addressed issues like pollution, waste disposal, health problems caused by industry, rehabilitation, loss of livelihood, displacement, etc.

In some of the environmental movements in Kerala, the activists used religious sentiments to strengthen their cause and mobilize people immediately. For instance, in *Thuruthi Samaram*, a strike against the relocation of 29 families to construct a national highway began on April 27, 2018, and it incorporated a spiritually-related cause. One of the main arguments made by the strikers was that the extension of the National Highway would destroy the Shri Puthiyil Bhagavathy Temple. According to their claims, the temple has been around for 400 years and is linked to the local Pulaya community's rituals and customs (തുരുത്തി സമരം, 2018).

Many of the environmental movements in India are caused by spiritual reasons. Regarding the claim that *Chipko* has a "religious foundation," Ramachandra Guha argues that "the religious milieu of everyday peasant existence has influenced peasant resistance in two different ways." On the one hand, the participation of religious figures, who enjoy high social status, helps the movement gain attention; on the other hand, peasants regularly employ religious symbols to advance their cause, particularly the usage of characters from the Hindu epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata to portray their opponents as evil and demonic. Sinha and others called it the "new traditionalist discourse," which portrayed traditional or pre-colonial society as "depicted by harmonious social relationships, ecologically sensitive resource use practices," and "generally far less burdened by the gender, economic, and environmental exploitation which concern contemporary observers (Tomalin, 2002)."

In India, it is popular to employ spirituality to advance the cause of environmental movements. Because religion has a strong cultural foundation in India, environmental campaigners hope to garner widespread public support through the use of religion with little additional work. However, there are occasions when this cannot provide a clear explanation for the issue, and people who do not adhere to a particular religious tradition may view it as a pointless argument. However, the excessive usage of religious symbols distances people from the actual cause of the problem - the degradation of the environment. It can be helpful only for specific spirituality-related issues not for environmental conservation. The use of religion also limits the creation of a scientific temperament in society and keeps individuals imprisoned in myths and an illusory world where they cannot advance.

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Entrepreneurial Resilience : A Reconceptualisation

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& Umajyothi. V

The existing research on entrepreneurial resilience is inconsistent, varying from merely applying the notion of psychological resilience to entrepreneurs to concentrating on the component of resilience that is unique to entrepreneurs. This brings up certain problems. First, the relationship between entrepreneurship and resilience is unclear. Second, as noted in several earlier research, this ambiguity gives rise to the illusion that links a person's psychological resilience to their ability to perform well at work. The significance of resilience for entrepreneurial activity is obscured by these challenges. Entrepreneurial resilience can be observed as a set of skills, as a process and an outcome. This article proposes a new conceptualization of entrepreneurial resilience including processes, and outcomes.

Keywords: Resilience, Entrepreneurial Resilience, Factors of Resilience, Reconceptualization

Introduction

In the ever-changing landscape of the 21st century, one quality has emerged as a linchpin for personal, community, and societal success: resilience. The capacity to overcome challenges and come out stronger than before has become crucial as we traverse a world plagued by pandemics, ecological disasters, economic volatility, and quick technological change.

Resilience is a dynamic force that enables people, organizations, and entire communities to adapt, prosper, and discover opportunities in the face of adversity. It is not just the ability to recover from losses. In this article, we explore the many facets of resilience, including its significance, its elements, and the techniques that help us not only weather the storms but also use their force for personal development and transformation.

The need for resilience is critical in the current environment for several reasons since the world faces many difficulties and uncertainties. The COVID-19 epidemic is still running strong, and it has brought to light the value of resilience on both an individual and societal level. Resilient people are better able to cope with the effects of the epidemic and recover from them. Extreme weather conditions, increasing sea levels, and a shortage of food are just a few of the serious risks posed by climate change. To adjust to these changes, lessen their effects, and come up with sustainable solutions, resilience is crucial.

Resilient businesses and economies are better prepared to absorb economic shocks like recessions or market changes. To get over obstacles, they can innovate, diversify, and pivot. Industries and job marketplaces can be disrupted by quick technological breakthroughs. The ability to adapt, learn new skills, and maintain relevance in the face of automation and digital transformation is a trait of resilient people and organizations. The fast-paced and linked character of the modern world can have an adverse effect on mental health. The ability to manage stress and control one's emotions are examples of resilience qualities. Sustainability and resilience go hand in hand. Resilient ecosystem development and the adoption of sustainable practices can lessen the effects of environmental deterioration and advance long-term well-being. Resilience is essential for human development on an individual level. It enables people to recover from setbacks, take lessons from mistakes, and adjust to changing circumstances. Communities that are resilient are better able to assist their residents in times of need. The resilience of a community is influenced by factors such as social cohesion, trust, and a sense of belonging.

Resilience is about thriving in the face of uncertainty and change, not merely recovering from hardship. To successfully traverse the complex problems of the present and the future, it is crucial to develop resilience skills and to promote a culture of resilience at the individual, community, and societal levels. Exploring the importance of resilience in many contexts, it is discovered that resilience is a crucial quality for entrepreneurs as well, enabling them to overcome obstacles and keep moving forward. An effective business person sets goals for the company and takes prompt action to meet those goals. Entrepreneurs frequently deal with information that is unclear, lacking, or constantly changing. Therefore, if resilient business owners are prepared to embrace ambiguity and adjust rapidly, they may have a better chance of succeeding. Entrepreneurs with resilience put forth a lot of effort to succeed, adapt to changing circumstances, and learn from their failures.

However, some scholars have referred to entrepreneurial resilience as psychological resilience for entrepreneurs, which raised a few issues regarding the ambiguity of the concept. Therefore, considering prior studies, this paper is an attempt to explore entrepreneurial resilience broadly by including factors like process, and outcome.

Concept of Resilience

The quality of resilience, which is defined as the capacity to overcome difficulties, frustrations, and bad luck, is crucial for an individual. According to Werner and Smith (1982), Rutter (1987), and Brown (2008), resilience is the capacity of people, families, and groups to successfully operate in the face of substantial life challenges. Resilience is a developmental process that shifts in response to changes in cognition, emotion, and the social environment rather than being a personal trait (Masten, Best, Garmezy, 1990).

In the face of adversity, the resilience process results in adaptation that is largely favorable (Luthar, Chiccheti, and Becker, 2000). Recovery differs from resilience as well. The term "recovery" refers to a trajectory in which baseline functionality gradually reverts to pre-event levels after transitioning to sub-threshold functioning. Contrarily, resilience is the capacity to sustain over time a steady trajectory of healthy psychological and physical functioning (Bonanno, 2004).

Construct of Resilience

In English, Spanish, French, and German, the word "resilient" refers to the capacity to bounce back. The term "resilience" comes from the Latin word "resiliens," which refers to a substance's pliable or elastic nature (R. R. Greene et al., 2002). Masten (2005) defined resilience as a class of events marked by positive outcomes despite significant risks to development or adaptation. Resistant to bending, stretching, compression, or other types of deformation, a physical object is resilient if it can restore its original shape or position. Resilience is also used to describe people who can overcome obstacles in the way of achieving their personal and professional goals (De Vries & Shields, 2005). Resilience is used to describe a person's ability to bounce back swiftly and readily from such losses (Zautra, Hall, & Murray, 2010). Resilience is a crucial quality for the entrepreneur (De Vries & Shields, 2005).

Enhancing networking, creating a network of coaches and mentors, accepting change as a natural part of life, and avoiding viewing crises as insurmountable problems are all ways to increase entrepreneurial resilience (Davidson, 2000).

Resilience has been defined in social science as the positive capacity of a system or organization to adjust to the effects of a catastrophic failure brought on by a power loss, fire, bomb, or similar disaster (Masten, 2009). The phrase has also been used to refer to a growing movement among organizations like businesses, communities, and governments to enhance their capacity to respond to and quickly recover from catastrophic events like natural disasters (Rutter, 2008). The resilience concept has also been extended to business continuity initiatives (Sheffi, 2005).

Resilience is typically best understood as a process. At first, it was thought to be a personal quality (Masten, 1994). However, most of the research today demonstrates that resilience is mostly the outcome of

people engaging with their environments and the mechanisms that either promote well-being or shield them from the overwhelming influence of risk factors (Zautra et al., 2010). Therefore, it is commonly accepted that resilience in its psychological and social contexts is something that must be learned (Rutter, 2008). These processes can be aided by one's own coping mechanisms or by supporting social policies that encourage resilience in communities, families, and schools (Leadbeater, Dodgen, & Solarz, 2005).

The Origin and Development of the Concept

The term "resilience" comes from the physics of materials, which defines it as an element's ability to withstand external shocks without breaking (Bernard & Barbosa, 2016). This idea was broadened in the 1950s to include psychology and later the social sciences. Since then, numerous definitions of resiliency have been created, and this continues to prevent agreement on a single, distinctive characterization of the term. However, most academics concur that there are two prerequisites for resiliency that must be met: exposure to an adversity-filled environment and the ensuing beneficial response to it (Bonanno, 2012).

Large-scale catastrophes like Chernobyl began to occur starting in the 1980s, sparking a tremendous deal of curiosity about their causes and effects. Due to these extreme occurrences, academics' focus has shifted from looking into exterior accidents that threaten businesses' ability to operate normally to looking into internal process failures that have the potential to shock the outside world (Linnenluecke, 2017). As a result, the literature from those years focused on the safety and dependability of the businesses that handled these important events in a better way, aiming to identify the most effective and resilient methods that allowed them to recover more quickly than others (Linnenluecke, 2017).

After the terrorist attacks of 2001, resilience research turned its focus to examining the significance of response tactics under ambiguous environmental situations. The literature from this time period emphasized the value of strengthening organizational resilience by utilizing employee strengths, adaptable business structures, and well-organized supply networks. Both research areas were developed at separate times to comprehend the reasons why unpleasant events occurred and their effects, as well as to produce recommendations for how organizations can respond to challenging situations (Linnenluecke, 2017).

Entrepreneurial Resilience

Since entrepreneurs frequently must deal with unforeseen occurrences that put their businesses' performance or even survival in jeopardy, the idea of resilience can also be applied to them. Setbacks occur as a result of disruptions to business operations caused by disruptive inventions, new competitors, financial crises, or environmental catastrophes (Duchek, 2018).

Entrepreneurs must possess resilience since it enables them to handle challenging times or business failures and allows them to restart even stronger than before (Hayward et al., 2010).

The combination of three distinct literary sources is where the concept of entrepreneurial resilience first emerged. The first source is the work of economists who looked at how entrepreneurs affected the growth of the economy. The second source is a psychological study, which investigated the typical traits and qualities that set entrepreneurs apart from other people. The third and final source is social and behavioural research, which emphasizes how important environmental factors are in shaping entrepreneurs' attitudes (Hedner et al., 2011).

Different Viewpoints on Entrepreneurial Resilience

Numerous studies have examined entrepreneurship resilience from various perspectives.

According to Ayala and Manzano's (2014) research, women entrepreneurs are more likely than males to experience commercial success as a result of resilience (including optimism). In a study of female scientists, engineers, and technologists, Martin, Wright, Beaven, and Matlay (2015) hypothesized that women's resilience in a world dominated by men may be attributed to their acceptance of traditional male business models and

their readiness to uphold male standards. Women had to overcome the rarity of being female entrepreneurs while male practitioners might be accepted as professional entrepreneurs right away.

According to St-Jean and Audet (2012), mentoring can help budding entrepreneurs improve their cognitive and emotional learning as well as their resilience. Duening (2010) urged curriculum designers for entrepreneurial education to incorporate the resilient mind and suggested that aspiring businesspeople experience the negative emotions related to failure and recovery beforehand.

Manzano-Garcia and Calvo (2013) utilized the Connor and Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) to Spanish entrepreneurs in order to measure individual qualities, and they concluded that the CD-RISC was a legitimate and reliable tool for doing so.

In their 2010 study, Branzei and Abdelnour examined the connection between terrorist threats and business resilience. After the political revolution that occurred in Tunisia between 2011 and 2014 (which caused economic instability and business disruptions), Mzid, Khachlouf, and Soparnot (2019) investigated four family businesses and examined the relationship between the development of personal resilience and family business resilience.

According to Baron, Franklin, and Hmieleski (2016), beginning entrepreneurs had less stress than those who took part in a larger study on perceived stress. The rationale was that business owners had high levels of psychological capital, and as a result of these ties, they felt good about themselves. In their 2014 study, Roche, Haar, and Luthans looked at the direct benefits of mindfulness levels and the mediating roles played by psychological capital on the well-being of organizational leaders.

Issues in Previous Research

A clear distinction between psychological resilience and entrepreneurial resilience is still underexplored. The question what is entrepreneurial resilience is yet to be noted.

To put it directly, most of the earlier studies in the previous section simply used entrepreneurs as the sample; hence, it may be likely that the same results would have been obtained if ordinary employees or stressful vocations had been used instead. If this research aimed to identify entrepreneur-specific phenomena, they ought to look at how the results would alter if only entrepreneurs were chosen as the participants.

Additionally, it cannot claim that the evaluations by Korber and McNaughton (2018) and Hartmann et al. (2022) adequately explain the entrepreneur-specific element of resilience. For instance, it is yet insufficient to distinguish entrepreneurial resilience research from that that merely applies the notion of resilience to entrepreneurial behaviour and attitude (Korber & McNaughton, 2018).

The second issue is that prior research made the mistake of only extending the idea to entrepreneurs, linking personal resiliency to company performance. They failed to recognize that this subject required multi-level analysis.

For instance, Branicki Sullivan-Taylor and Livschitz (2018) noted that it was not enough to consider only individual resilience because entrepreneurial resilience may be found in both individuals and organizations. The connection between entrepreneurial resilience and organizational resilience, as well as between entrepreneurial resilience and business success, has not yet been extensively studied.

Third, it is still unknown how much entrepreneurial resilience as a characteristic influences business performance, despite academics' multi-level analysis of the topic (Santoro et al., 2021). The subject of why resilience is vital for entrepreneurial activity has not been addressed in the present literature. So, this paper reconceptualises entrepreneurial resilience as an approach of process and outcome and the influence of internal and external factors in entrepreneurial resilience.

Conceptual Framework of Entrepreneurial Resilience

This conceptual paper tried to explore how entrepreneurs face challenging situations with hard work

and persistence and overcome difficulties until they become successful. Here, two factors play an important role: internal and external factors. The internal factors include problem-solving and information processing, close relationships with friends, partners, spiritual figures, self-efficacy and reward system related by successful attitude, stress response, self-regulation etc. Some of the external factors are family system, friendship, peer group, religion, tradition, ritual, values, law etc.

The concept of resilience describes it as the process of reacting and adjusting to difficulty. This strategy is represented by Richardson's (1990) definition of resilience. In his words: "The process of coping with disruptive, stressful, or challenging life events in a way that provides the individual with additional protective and coping skills than prior to the disruption that results from the event" (Richardson, 1990, p. 34). According to this perspective, the act of responding resolutely to hardship is generative, making people better off than they were before they encountered the difficulty.

When it comes to entrepreneurial resilience through *process*, both resilience and entrepreneurial processes are facilitated by entrepreneurial action. In their study of Palestinian refugee entrepreneurs in Lebanon who were dealing with long-term adversity, Shepherd et al. (2020) noted that these individuals' desire to make money and assist others motivated them to engage in entrepreneurial activity, which prompted them to engage in integration activities with Lebanon and a commitment to avoiding adversity. Their resilience was created by these processes, which in turn encouraged entrepreneurship. However, Shepherd et al. (2020) found that adversity spurs some people to take entrepreneurial action, which in turn may have resilience-boosting effects. As a result, entrepreneurship functions as a resilience mechanism and is integrated into the process of dealing with adversity.

Naturally, different people will experience ongoing functioning differently following a negative event. The psychology literature, on the other hand, has a propensity to focus on outcomes related to physical and mental health, such as the absence of sadness, anxiety, and somatization. Resilience outcomes have also been thought to include respondents' life satisfaction and the absence of post-traumatic stress symptoms (Seery et al., 2010).

When it comes to the *outcome* of entrepreneurial resilience, Shepherd et al. (2020) also looked at the resilience gains made by refugee entrepreneurs. In their opinion, these results demonstrated "positive functioning in the face of adversity" (Shepherd et al., 2020, p. 8). They observed that most of the refugee business owners they spoke with were able to achieve resilient results, such as proactive problem-solving, forging a link with a larger cause, and developing a sense of independence. Some refugee business people, however, were able to maintain a realistic optimism and a sense of belonging in a variety of socio cultural groups.

In order to understand resilience as a process, it is important to understand how people respond to challenges and deal with stressors. Disagreement pertinent to this understanding of resilience, then, relates to the level of functioning resilient people sustain in the face of adversity. For instance, Tugade and Fredrickson's (2004) conceptualization of resilience as the capacity to adapt and recover from adversity is a widely used definition of resilience in the psychology field. This suggests that persons who are resilient might first experience a reduction in functioning from which they can recover.
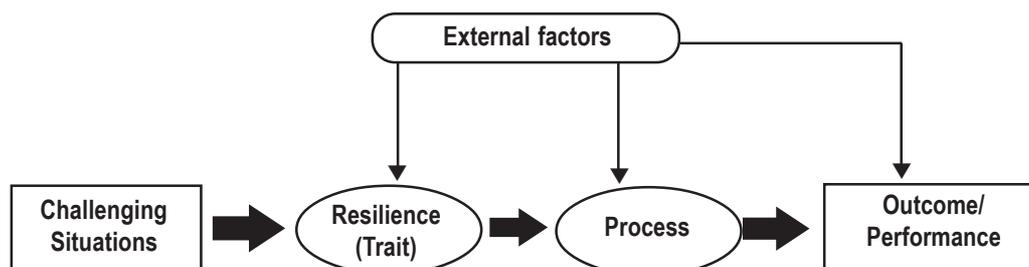

Figure2: Reconceptualised framework

Conclusion

This paper presented the conceptual framework, contending that result and/or process aspects were crucial to entrepreneurial resilience by narrowly choosing preceding literature. The idea of resilience is still relatively new in entrepreneurship study, despite an increasing number of studies applying it in organization and management studies. Most of the prior studies tried to interconnect psychological resilience with entrepreneurial resilience. Then, this reconceptualization supported the claims made by several academics that research on entrepreneurial resilience required more focus on processes and outcome factors. There is a lot of scope for future studies in entrepreneurial resilience. Clearly, there are many ways to describe resilience, and it is a term that is constantly changing. The fact that each person's process is different makes it difficult to forecast and regulate resilience.

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Shining Light on Gold: Forecasting Gold Exchange Traded Funds (ETFS) using Arima Models for Investment Insights

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The basic goal of gold price ETFs is to replicate the performance of gold prices, assisting investors in diversifying their portfolios and risk management. These ETFs' predictive analysis is a great tool for making informed investing decisions. This research looks at the The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund from July 1, 2010, to August 1, 2023, and employs ARIMA analysis for a three-month projection until November 1, 2023. Notably, the Next Funds Gold ETF has grown consistently during the forecast period. The study suggests that investors are likely to continue investing in gold due to a prevailing infatuation with it.

Keywords: Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund (ETF), Prediction, ARIMA Analysis, Diversification, Management of risk

Introduction

Unlike the challenges of purchasing, storing, and selling physical gold, Gold Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs) are exchanged on stock markets, assuring high liquidity and quick access. One significant advantage of Gold ETFs is their liquidity; they may be bought or sold at market rates during trading hours, in contrast to the difficulties of dealing with real gold, which involves additional costs and logistical considerations such as storage and insurance. Because the ETF provider manages these factors, gold ETFs alleviate these burdens. Due to the privilege of fractional ownership, Gold ETFs are more accessible to a broader spectrum of investors. Furthermore, as compared to the costs connected with real gold, such as premiums and storage expenditures, Gold ETFs often suffer cheaper management fees. However, it is critical to recognise that investing in gold, whether through actual gold or Gold ETFs, comes with its own set of risks and considerations. Investors should consider their objectives, risk tolerance, and work with financial managers to develop the best approach.

Thematic Review

Gold Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs) have grown in popularity in India due to their ease of use and diversification potential. This examination looks at the important factors that influence Gold ETF investments. Choudhary and Tiwari (2023) examined the regulatory environment and market dynamics, noting potential regulatory risks for investors. The study of investor's attitudes and behaviours, awareness were conducted by Sharma and Verma (2022). Srivastava and Mehta (2019) investigated tracking errors in ETFs, attributing them to expenditures and liquidity. The liquidity and redemption procedure was explored, with Mishra et al. (2021) raising concerns regarding perceived complexity. Garg and Agrawal (2019) examined performance and discovered competitive returns despite volatility in gold prices. This comprehensive research sheds light on the factors influencing Gold ETF investments in India. Understanding these dynamics is critical for making sound investment decisions and driving market growth.

Need and Significance of the study

Analysing past price patterns, market trends, and economic data can help investors better comprehend

the possible future performance of gold ETFs. Predictive research is essential for controlling the investing risks connected with gold ETFs. Investors can identify potential risks and uncertainties that may affect ETF performance by scrutinising historical data and current market conditions. With this knowledge, they may modify their investing plans, manage resources wisely, and employ risk-mitigation tactics to preserve their portfolios. Predictive analysis can be used to optimise the timing of gold ETF investments and withdrawals. Price patterns, technical indicators, and market sentiment can all be used to help investors make better educated selections. This can result in the ETF being purchased at a lower price or being sold before a potential downturn, thereby enhancing total investment results. Given gold's function as a safe-haven asset susceptible to factors such as inflation, currency changes, and geopolitical events, incorporating gold ETFs into investment portfolios as a diversification technique can help decrease total portfolio risk. As a result, Gold ETF forecasting is unavoidable.

Objective of the study

The study intents to predict the future value of The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund.

Hypothesis

There is no linear prediction trend in the future value of The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund

Methodology of the study

The study is based on secondary data pertaining to The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund from July 1st, 2010 to August 1st, 2023 on a monthly basis. ARIMA analysis was used to forecast The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund up to November 1st, 2023. The forecast is valid for three months. The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) is a financial institution's specific investment product. Yahoo Finance served as the data source.

Result and Discussion

From 1st July 2010 to 1st August 2023, the average price of The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund was Rs. 4225.5. The lowest possible price determined was Rs.2985, while the highest possible price determined was Rs.6846. The skewness reported throughout the period was 1.35, and the Kurtosis reported was 3.86. The Jarque-Bera test coefficient is 52.5, and the p value is 0.0000 (P larger than 5%), indicating that the given distribution is not normally distributed.

Figure 1.1   The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund-First Difference-Graph
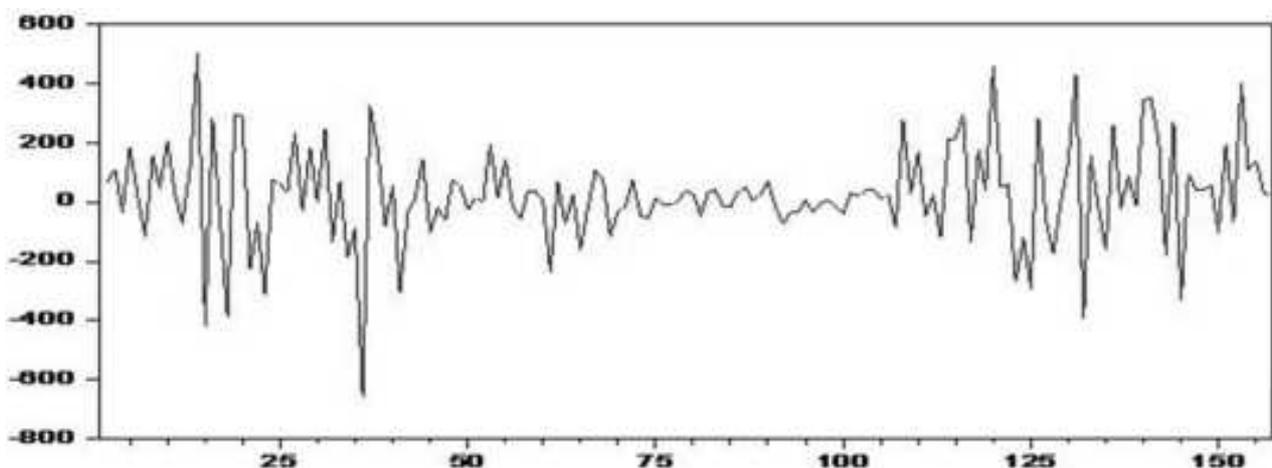
Table 1.1 Unit Root test of The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund

Null Hypothesis: D(NextFundsGPET) has a unit root				
Exogenous: Constant				
Lag Length: 4 (Automatic - based on SIC, maxlag=13)				
			t-Statistic	Prob.*
Augmented Dickey-Fuller test statistic			-10.97812	0.0000
Test critical values:	1% level		-3.474265	
	5% level		-2.880722	
	10% level		-2.577077	
*MacKinnon (1996) one-sided p-values.				
Augmented Dickey-Fuller Test Equation				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
D(NextFundsGPET) (-1))	-4.388166	0.399719	-10.97812	0.0000
D(NextFundsGPET) (-1),2)	2.345400	0.349673	6.707413	0.0000
D(NextFundsGPET) (-2),2)	1.530649	0.268411	5.702635	0.0000
D(NextFundsGPET) (-3),2)	0.826428	0.176037	4.694627	0.0000
D(NextFundsGPET) (-4),2)	0.278491	0.080601	3.455196	0.0007
C	2.194471	14.46701	0.151688	0.8796
R-squared	0.863977	Mean dependent var		0.886667
Adjusted R-squared	0.859254	S.D. dependent var		472.2212
S.E. of regression	177.1591	Akaike info criterion		13.23115
Sum squared resid	4519489.	Schwarz criterion		13.35158
Log likelihood	-986.3364	Hannan-Quinn criter.		13.28008
F-statistic	182.9290	Durbin-Watson stat		2.044864
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000			

Source: Source: Authors' own calculation (www. yahoo finance)

As indicated by the significantly negative test statistic of -10.97812 and an exceptionally low asymptotic p-value of 0.0000 (P-value 5%), the null hypothesis is convincingly rejected. When first differences in data from July 1, 2010, to August 1, 2023, this strongly show that there is no unit root in The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund. As a result, the variable is most likely stationary. For this regression, the Schwarz Information Criterion (SIC) automatically computed a lag of four. Notably, the regression results show substantial coefficients for the Next Funds GPET1 variables' lagged differences. With an R-squared value of 0.863977, the model appears to capture a significant percentage of the variation in the dependent variable. It is worth noting, however, that the coefficient for the constant term (C) does not appear to be statistically significant, implying that it may not add considerably to the model's explanatory power.

Figure 1.2   The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund-First Difference-Graph
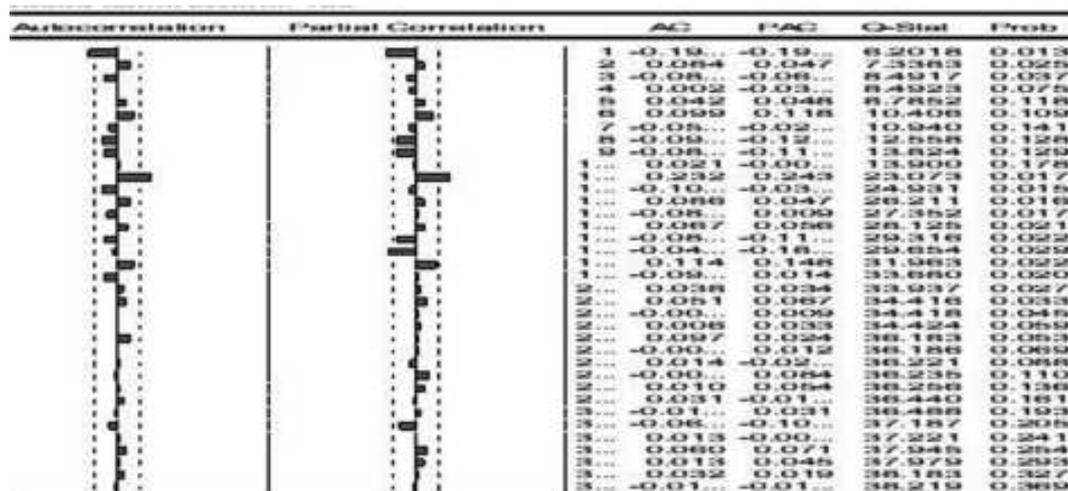

Table 1.2 ARIMA- The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund

Dependent Variable: NextFundsGPET1				
Method: ARIMA Maximum Likelihood (OPG - BHHH)				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	26.46851	14.04797	1.884152	0.0615
AR(11)	0.234137	0.082465	2.839221	**0.0051**
MA(1)	-0.176568	0.066782	-2.643931	**0.0091**
SIGMASQ	25211.80	1938.149	13.00818	**0.0000**
R-squared	**0.091440**	Mean dependent var		24.75000
Adjusted R-squared	**0.073508**	S.D. dependent var		167.1174
S.E. of regression	160.8579	Akaike info criterion		**13.02841**
Sum squared resid	3933041.	Schwarz criterion		13.10661
Log likelihood	-1012.216	Hannan-Quinn criter.		13.06017
F-statistic	**5.099261**	Durbin-Watson stat		**2.029554**
Prob(F-statistic)	**0.002168**			
Inverted AR Roots	.88	.74-.47i	.74+.47i	.36-.80i
	.36+.80i	-.12-.87i	-.12+.87i	-.57-.66i
	-.57+.66i	-.84-.25i	-.84+.25i	
Inverted MA Roots	.18			

Source: Source: Authors' own calculation (www. yahoo finance)

The ARIMA model, a popular time series analysis tool, consists of autoregressive and moving average components. The constant term (C) has a coefficient of 26.46851 with a standard error of 14.04797 in this analysis, making it marginally significant at the 0.05 significance level, as evidenced by a t-statistic of 1.884152 and a corresponding p-value of 0.0615. The AR (11) coefficient is statistically significant, with a value of 0.234137 and a standard deviation of 0.082465, as confirmed by a t-statistic of 2.839221 and a p-value of 0.0051.Similarly, the MA (1) coefficient is statistically significant at -0.17656 with a standard error of 0.066782, as evidenced by a t-statistic of -2.643931 and a p-value of 0.0091. With a t-statistic of 13.00818 and a p-value

of 0.0000, the variance term (SIGMASQ) is statistically significant at 25211.80 with a standard error of 1938.149. The R-squared value of 0.091440 indicates that the model only explains a small amount of the variation in the dependent variable.The modified R-squared value is slightly lower, indicating that adding more components to the model may not boost explanatory power considerably. The overall statistical significance of the model is highlighted by the F-statistic of 5.099261 with a p-value of 0.002168.

Figure 1.3   The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund- forecasted for Three months
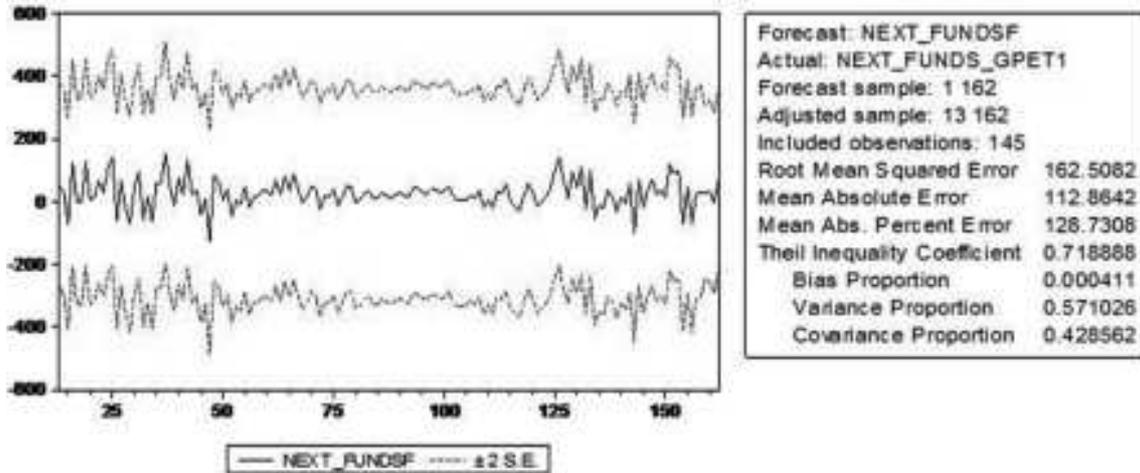
Theil Inequality Coefficient - Error is 0.7188, within the range of 0-1. Bias proportion, Variance proportion and Covariance proportion are also within the range.

Figure 1.4   The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund- Inverse Roots
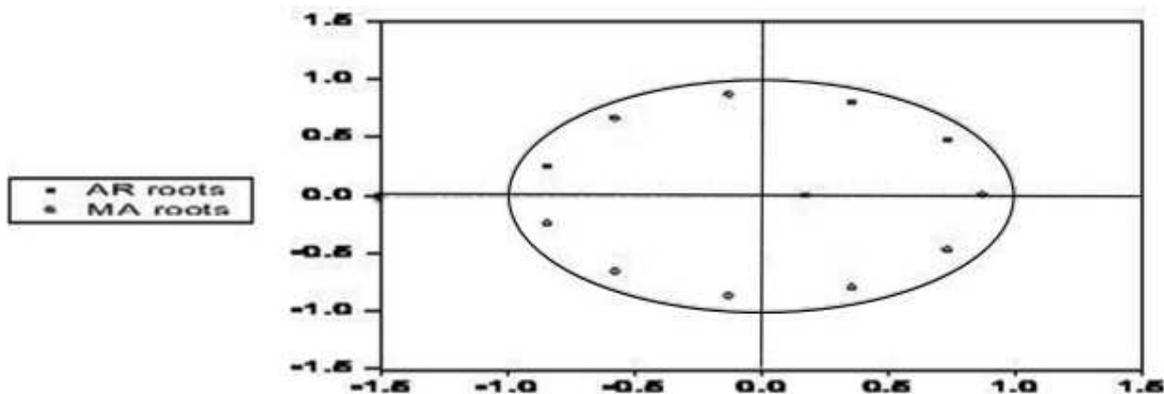
The AR roots and MA roots are within the circle, shows prediction is reliable.

Figure 1.5   The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund- Residual, Actual and Fitted
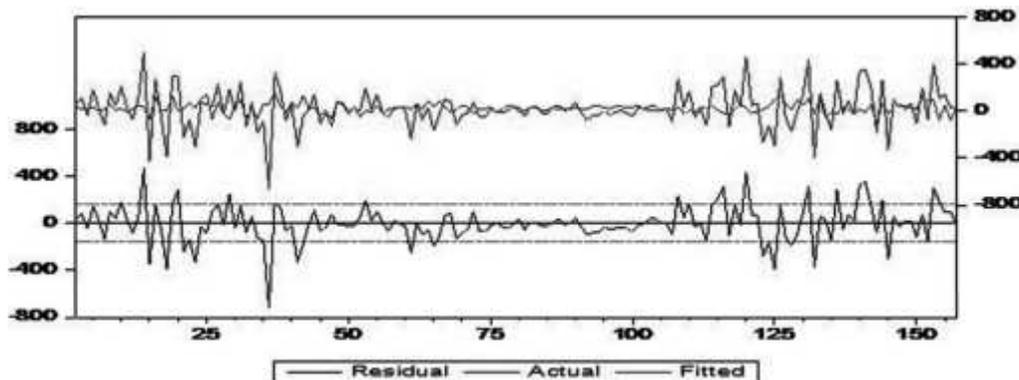
Figure 1.6   The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund- C, AR (11), MA (1) & SIGMASQ
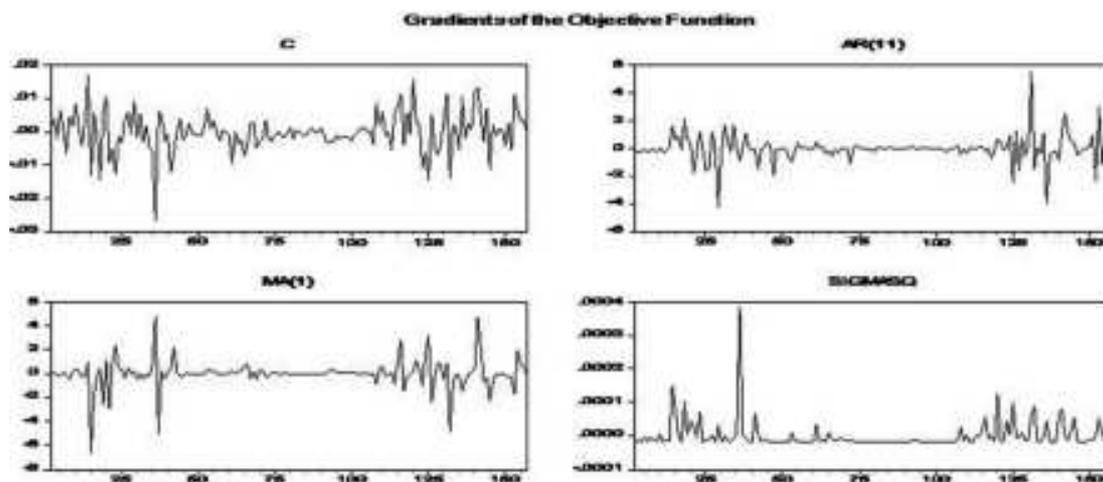
Table 1.3 Prediction - The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund

Sep 01, 2023	6,895.42
Oct 01, 2023	6,920.13
Nov 01,2023	6,944.84

Source: Source: Authors' own calculation (www. yahoo finance)

Behold the crystal ball of financial forecasting! Let the data reveal the fate of the Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund from September 1, 2023 to November 1. The anticipated value emerges like a hidden gem in the mystic world of September at Rs. 6895.42. However, the adventure does not finish there; the road ahead leads us to October, when the fund's fortunes shine brighter at Rs. 6920.13. And as the winds of November whisper their secrets, we reach the summit at Rs. 6944.84. This isn't just information; it's the pulse of financial markets, the heartbeat of investors, and the beat of anticipation. The numbers dance, offering a story of prospective gains and calibrated risks, asking investors to join the wealth building adventure. The future, as shown here, is an exciting voyage into the world of research and prediction.

Conclusion

We travel through The Next Funds Gold Price Exchange Traded Fund, which spans from July 1, 2010, to August 1, 2023, in the delicate tapestry of financial research. The present journey takes us into the forecast crystal ball, extending our vision to November 1, 2023, revealing a steady increase in the Next Funds Gold ETF. This reflects humanity's continuing infatuation with the valuable yellow metal, which has long been associated with wealth and security. However, before embarking on this trip, identify the financial goals, examine risk tolerance, and consider the time horizon. Rather than falling to market timing temptations, true gold searchers focus on gold's long-term function in their portfolios. Gold, as a diversity jewel, should not be used in isolation. Seek the advice of a financial expert, a navigator, to track the financial stars on this golden journey. Geopolitical turmoil, inflation, and currency fluctuations all have an impact on gold's attraction as a safe haven.   Remember that gold shines but is volatile. Wisdom protects investors on this epic adventure. Alignselectionswith financial destiny and risk tolerance, because each investment contributes to the big narrative of riches.

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The Impact of Karnataka Assembly Elections (2023) on Lok Sabha Elections 2024

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Ever since 2014, the Assembly, Lok Sabha, and even by-elections have been a high-stakes contest for the the BJP, Congress and the State-centric parties. Because of this, the subsequent assembly elections are thought of as the quarterfinals and semifinals before the Lok Sabha elections of 2024. Nonetheless, the results of the Karnataka Assembly elections in May 2023 have strengthened the already-wounded Congress, which has failed to defeat the Narendra Modi led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the national elections in 2014 and 2019. However, it also forced the BJP to rethink its strategy, which it intends to replicate in other States that are going for polls and also at the national elections. In this regard, the article looks at the main causes of the Congress win, the BJP's loss, and the JD (S) downward trend. Subsequently, it examines how the impact of Karnataka Assembly elections might affect the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in 2024.

Keywords: Karnataka, BJP, Congress, jD(S), Caste

High-Stake - Karnataka Assembly Elections- 2023

For national parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress (INC), and the State-centric parties like Janata Dal (Secular), the Assembly election was crucial. It was important for the Congress to come back after losing to the BJP in 2018, which was the single largest party. Nevertheless, with the backing of three Independents, the Congress and JD (S) formed a coalition government in order to prevent the BJP from forming the government.

Table-1: Party Performance in Assembly Elections (2018)

Political Party	Seats Won (May 2018)	Improvement from 2013 polls
BJP	104	+ 65
Congress	78	- 43
JD (S)	38	- 02

Source: *Election Commission of India, May 2018[1]*

Paradoxically, the Congress-JD (S) coalition government was not able to hold on to power for long because of the BJP's "Operation Lotus." This led to the resignation of 17 MLAs from both the Congress and JD (S), and as a result, the by polls were held in December 2019. Of the 17 defectors, 12 of them won the re election, two lost, and the remaining members either did not run for office and one was accommodated in the upper house.[2] Still B.S. Yeddurappa led government managed to stay in office until July 2021, when allegations of corruption forced B.S. Yeddurappa to make way for Basavaraj Bommai to assume the Chief Minister post. Against this background, the Assembly elections were held in May 2023.

The BJP saw the 2023 elections to be crucial on two fronts: first, deepening its base of support in the State, which it sees as a gateway to South India and a hot bed of "Hindutva" ideology. Second, in order to ensure a hat trick for the Modi-led government at the Centre, it wanted to maintain the trend of winning more than 20 seats in Lok Sabha elections, likely to be held in May 2024. Conversely, the Congress sought

to regain the lost power in the State and win back the trust of the people. This was demonstrated by the Congress's declining performance in successive national and assembly elections under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi. Furthermore, the party has not won any key States save Himachal Pradesh in 2022, despite winning the elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh (December 2018).

The decline of the JD (S) party was evident in election after election, as its share of the vote decreased. Its votes went to the Congress and BJP in its strongholds, such as the Old Mysore region, which includes significant districts like Tumkur, Bengaluru (Rural), Mysuru, Hasan, Kolar, Ramnagara, and Mandya. Moreover, it is obvious in the recent times that it aims for a fractured mandate in which it may play the role of kingmaker, rather than forming the government on its own. At the same time, the party wants to broaden its base of support in order to win a significant number of Lok Sabha seats, to sustain its national presence. Thus, the assembly elections was a high stake battle not just for BJP, Congress, and JD (S), but also for parties like Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Karnataka Rastra Samiti (KRS) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which were contesting 213, 200, and 137 seats respectively, and were attempting to increase their vote share and gain a few seats.[3]

A Clear Verdict

Table-2: Party Performance-Karnataka Assembly Elections-2023

Political Parties	Seats Won (Total Legislative Assembly Seats - 224)
BJP	66
Congress	135
JD (S)	19
Kalyana Rajya Pragathi Paksha	01
Sarvodaya Karnataka Paksha	01
Independents	02

Source: Election Commission of India, May 2023[4]

With a vote share of 42.88 per cent in the 2023 Assembly election, the Congress secured 135 seats, marking a historic victory. This performance was better than its previous record, which was 132 seats, with a vote share of 40.84 per cent in 1999 under the leadership of S.M. Krishna. But, the all time high score was under the leadership of Veerendra Patil in 1989, when it won 178 seats with a vote share of 43.76 per cent. After winning a simple majority in the State legislature in May 2023, Congress appears to have become the first single largest party to do so since 2004.[5]

With a vote share of 36 per cent, the BJP was able to gain 66 seats this time around, a decrease from the 2018 assembly elections (104 seats). The Prime Minister Narendra Modi remained the star campaigner, he was accompanied by prominent party figures and central ministers. Despite this, the party lost deposits in 31 constituencies, or roughly 13.8 per cent of the seats it contested for and an estimated 34.4 per cent of the seats it contested in South Karnataka.[6] This election was a major setback for the BJP as it was the only State in South India that the party had ever won. They were unable to overturn the practice that voters never chose an incumbent party to form government since 1985.

In the 2018 Assembly elections, the JD (S) obtained 37 seats, with an 18.36 per cent vote share, but this time it only managed to secure 19 seats with a 13.29 per cent vote share. The party's aspirations to become a kingmaker were dashed, and it continues with a declining trend since 1999. Moreover, the party is unable to match its best performance in 1994, when it garnered 115 seats with a 33.54 per cent vote share.[7] Since then, JD (S) has only contributed to the formation of the government by supporting either BJP or Congress, rather than forming the government on its own.

Factors Contributing to Congress Victory

Several factors have contributed to the victory of Congress and it has in a way helped to maintain the momentum for the Lok Sabha Elections in 2024.

Focus on Local Issues

This time, the Congress focused more on local than national issues, which helped it to win, in contrast to earlier Assembly elections in other States, including Karnataka. For instance, Corruption continues to be a significant issue in state and national elections and has traditionally played a significant role in determining the fate of the ruling government. This election was not any different. As a result, Congress focused more attention on corruption, which was not only a political issue for the elections, but was further supported by the Karnataka State Contractors' Association, which alleged that on most of the projects, the contractors had to pay the members of the ruling party 40% commission. During the election campaign, the Congress effectively leveraged this by airing advertisements such as "40 Percent Sarkara" and the "cash for bed" scam (during the Covid-19), which struck a chord with voters. On the whole, the Congress avoided critiquing the Modi government or its leadership and concentrated less on the national issues raised by the BJP in the State, which restricted the discussion and issues to a local rather than national level. This was the most significant lesson the Congress learned from its triumph in Himachal Pradesh (2022). It successfully resisted the ambitions of the dairy cooperative "Amul," based in Gujarat, its plans (April 2023) to enter the Karnataka market and supply milk and curd. Furthermore, Union Home Minister Amit Shah argued that, the collaboration between the two brands (Amul and Nandini) might "do wonders for the dairy sector".[8] The Congress effectively capitalised on this by opposing Amul's entry into the Karnataka market at the expense of the locally formed cooperative based 'Nandini' brand of milk, which is valued at 21,000 cr and provides livelihood for 25 lakh farmers. Incumbent Chief Minister B. Bommai provided clarification on this matter, but Congress had raised a crucial point in order to secure sizable votes (Farmers). In order to win over people, the party also concentrated on topics like rising costs, poor governance, weak leadership, unemployment, and so on.

Effective Social Engineering

With his support of AHINDA, the Kannada acronym for *Alpasankhyataru* (minorities), *Hindulidavaru* (backward classes), and *Dalitaru* (Dalits), Siddramaiah played a crucial role in consolidating the votes. By promising welfare policies and programmes for AHINDA communities in the event that they were elected to power, the Congress was able to successfully mobilize the populace. The Axis exit poll from India Today served as evidence of this. The Scheduled Castes (SC) increased their support for the Congress party from 46 per cent in 2018 to 60 per cent in this election. Additionally, 88 per cent of Muslims firmly supported the Congress, according to the exit survey.[9]

The BJP's waning support from the Lingayat community, who have consistently backed the party, also helped the Congress. Moreover, another significant factor was the consolidation of Muslim votes, who comprise 78.93 lakhs (12.92%) of the total 6.11 crores and are generally split between the Congress and JD (S).[10] But, because the Congress party had promised to restore the four per cent Muslim quota that the Bommai government had removed in March 2023, the Muslims overwhelmingly backed the Congress this time. The Congress party's manifesto also called for the outlawing of organisations that "promote enmity or hatred," such as the Bajrang Dal and the Popular Front of India.[11] The BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi used this to aggressively depict the Congress as being against Lord Hanuman and Hindu sensibilities, yet this narrative helped the Congress win over more Muslim as well as Hindu votes.

Strong and United leadership

Despite having different opinions and being serious contenders for the Chief Minister post/central party post, the party's three leading figures, Siddaramaiah, DK Shivakumar and Mallikarjun Kharge, put up a united front in this election, at least to the public, which significantly contributed to Congress's win. Out of all the

MLAs, Siddaramaiah continues to be the tallest. His rich experience as the party's deputy chief minister (1994), as a cabinet minister (key portfolio), his leadership roles in both the opposition and the Congress legislative party, and his successful one-term tenure as chief minister (2013-2018) have all helped him and the party bring the electorate together. His charismatic demeanor and widespread appeal via AHINDA have contributed to the growth of the State Congress. Another powerful leader has been DK Shivakumar, a strong OBC leader from the Vokkaliga group who is popular among his caste and also the youth. In addition, he has extensive political experience as a cabinet minister, and as a political strategist prevented the BJP from poaching Congress MLAs.

The INC's appointment of Mallikarjun Kharge, a strong and charismatic Dalit leader, to the national presidency made it abundantly evident to the electorate that Congress is committed to AHINDA. As the president of the Congress and as a popular politician in Karnataka, he started the work six months ahead of the State polls. Kharge took most of the responsibility, even though leaders like Priyanka Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and other popular national Congress officials campaigned in the state. The combination of these three individuals sent a strong message about stable governance to the electorate, in contrast to the BJP, which was struggling to present a credible candidate as the party's next chief minister.

Five guarantees: A Game Changer

The political parties' ability to win elections still depends on free bees. Congress took it a step further in this regard and declared the "five Guarantees" during its elections campaign, i.e., *Gruha Jyoti* provides 200 units of free electricity to every household; *Gruha Lakshmi* provides Rs. 2,000 monthly assistance to women who are the heads of every family; *Anna Bhagya* provides 10 kg of free rice to every member of a BPL household; *Uchta Prayana* provides free bus transportation for women; and *Yuva Nidhi* provides Rs. 3,500 per month for unemployed youth who are graduates and Rs. 1,500 for unemployed diploma holders who are between the ages of 18 and 25 for a two-year period. These promises, which are expected to cost the government Rs. 52,000 crore annually and benefit 1.30 crore families, were a game-changer because the BJP was unable to compete on these lines. All the four of the five poll guarantees are already implemented, except *Yuva Nidhi* as of November 2023.

BJP's Road to Defeat

At first, the Bommai government was very certain that it would retake the State on the basis of governance, development, pro-Hindutva policies, the efficacious policies and programmes of the central government, and Modi's capable leadership. Paradoxically, these poll planks did not produce the desired outcome. The government fiddled with the State reservation system by relocating Muslims from the OBC quota to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category and raising the reservation for the Vokkaliga and Lingayat communities. In addition to upsetting the Pasmanda Muslims, this action did not help the BJP win over the Lingayats and Vokkaligas. Limited results were obtained even with the BJP's efforts to increase reservation for SC (15% to 17%) and ST (3% to 7%). The results of the elections accurately mirrored this, with the Congress winning more seats than the BJP in the constituencies dominated by Lingayats and Vokkaligas. Simultaneously, the aggressive campaign by State and top BJP leaders against the Congress's proposal to outlaw Bajrang Dal in the event of their election did not win over the votes of Hindu community as anticipated.

Since 2014, the BJP has been reliant on the leadership of Narendra Modi and national issues in the subsequent Assembly elections, and has experienced some degree of success. This experiment, meanwhile, did not have much of an impact in the State. For example, Union Home Minister Amit Shah attended 30 rallies and Narendra Modi participated in 42 and both men ran intense campaigns, but they did not receive the same support from State leaders as B.S. Yeddyurapp, the tallest leader and four-time Chief Minister, or K.S. Eshwarappa, a powerful leader form the Kuruba community. These individuals were not in the forefront due to allegations of corruption, and the incumbent Chief Minister, Basvaraj Bommai, was unable to refute

the accusations of corruption made against his government, as the Congress displayed posters in various cities and on social media featuring a QR code and the phrase 'PayCM.[12] Hence, the BJP's attempts to hold on to power in the State failed due to anti-incumbency and over dependence on national leaders.

The Decline of JD (S)

As JD (S) failed to draw any lessons from the results of the previous elections, their deteriorating trend continued. In the end, the party received just 19 seats, with a 5 per cent decrease in its vote share from the 2018 elections.[13] Both the Congress and the BJP are taking away the party's main support base, the Vokkaligas in the old Mysore region. The JD (S) continues to be perceived as a Vokkaligas-dominated party, and its poor performance can be attributed to its inability to broaden its base beyond the old Mysore region and to make the party inclusive of all castes. The party's top brass and prominent leaders seem to be still made up of former Indian Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda and his family members. Consequently, the party's abortive attempt to accept leaders from other communities to serve as the party's leader at least for a minimum of one full term, still remains a distant dream. Additionally, party's chances were negatively impacted by its top-down strategy of siding with the Congress or BJP to form the government without consulting its cadres and at the expense of the party's ideology (secularism). As a result, JD (S) chose to stick with its current course of action and form an alliance with the NDA for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in spite of opposition within the party. Overall, the party need to reform and adopt key strategies to make itself a viable alternative to Congress and BJP.

Impact on Lok Sabha Elections (2024)

Winning consecutive Assembly elections is crucial for the BJP and Congress because the outcomes are always seen as a zero-sum game in power politics and are linked to national goals (forming the Central government). For JD (S), it aims to get fewer seats, which will have a greater national representation and may even join the NDA government, if it is voted power. In this sense, the Karnataka Assembly elections were viewed as a quarterfinal, with the ongoing elections in Telangana, MP, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Mizoram serving as the semi-finals, before the Lok Sabha elections of 2024.[14]

Boost for Congress, Rethinking for BJP

The Congress's triumph in the Karnataka Assembly elections of 2023 has guaranteed a politically stable government with no room for "operation Lotus." It was good for the Congress, because it gave them more power to position themselves as the front-runner to lead the opposition Indian National Development Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) against the Narendra Modi-led NDA in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Since the BJP is a major rival, the victory has provided the Congress workers much need energy and it is hoping for a victory in the ongoing Assembly elections in Telangana, MP, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Mizoram, where Congress has a significant chance of forming the government. Additionally, because party President Mallikarjun Kharge is not descended from a Gandhi family, the election was also a contest for his prestige. This has improved Mallikarjun Kharge's reputation not just in Karnataka, but across States, which are going for polls.

However, after losing the State, it is time for the BJP to reconsider its approach. This has a significant effect on party cadres in the five states that will hold elections in November 2023 as well, since the party is hoping to win four of those states and form the government. The BJP needs to acknowledge that its aggressive promotion of Hindutva, over-reliance on Modi as the main campaigner, and incessant focus on the national issues did not provide the desired outcomes. The BJP and Congress face off directly in States like MP, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh, but their political influence is restricted in Mizoram and Telangana, where the contest is between Congress vs BRS (in Telangana) and MNF versus ZPM (in Mizoram). As a result, the outcome of the Karnataka elections has significant impact on BJP's prospects in the 2023 November Assembly elections.

The following table shows the performance of the three major Political Parties in the Lok Sabha Election in Karnataka since 2004

Table-3 : Party Performance - Lok Sabha Elections

Parties	2004	2009	2014	2019
BJP	18	19	17	25
Congress	8	6	9	1
JD (S)	2	3	2	1

Source: *Election Commission of India, 2004-2019* [15]

Advantage for Congress?

Congress currently enjoys an edge because of its historic victory in the 2023 Assembly elections. The party cadre's morale is also at an all-time high. Four of the five promises made by the Siddaramaiah government have already been implemented, and the party has further committed to delivering similar promises in other States that are going for polls. As a result, it has a track record of keeping its promises and will win over voters in other states. The party is confident that Mallikarjuna Kharge's leadership and the Karnataka strategy they used can be replicated in other states and nationally. If the Congress keeps up its strong momentum of consolidating the votes from the AHINDA, Lingayat, and Vokkaliga, it will be able to secure more than 20 seats (out of 28) in the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections. Ultimately, in order to maintain momentum for the Lok Sabha Elections, the Congress needs to sustain the social engineering, strengthen AHINDA, and attack the Modi-led government on issues like corruption, the State not receiving its fair share of GST revenue and for not providing drought relief. All these forth, can help the party to achieve the 20 seat target.

On the other hand, it is seen that the Karnataka voters, vote differently in State and National elections and are more likely to be swayed by Modi's charisma, Hindutva, and national narratives than by Rahul Gandhi, local issues, and the anti-Modi narrative. These challenges make it difficult for the Congress to accomplish this goal. What, meanwhile, was effective for the Congress in Karnataka? maybe not as effective in the Hindi heart land. Moreover, Congress needs to take into account the interests of its INDIA allies in their individual states for the Lok Sabha Elections.

BJP can do it?

In order to maintain its best performance, which included winning 25 seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha Elections, the BJP has adjusted its approach as needed. The BJP and JD (S) alliance was formed in September 2023 against the backdrop of the Congress victory in the State (May 2023) and the impending 2024 Lok Sabha elections, which is six months away. This is one of two key strategies. The goal of this benevolent alliance is to combine the votes of the two dominant communities, the Lingayat and Vokkaliga, which make up the core voter bases of both the BJP and JD (S), respectively. The problem for this alliance, though, is whether the JD (S) and BJP party workers can successfully canvass support for BJP candidates, and vice versa. It also depends on whether the party's core supporters - the JD (S) - Vokkaligas and for BJP - Lingayats in particular - will switch their votes to support the candidates running in their respective constituencies. As a result, this alliance cannot rely solely on these socioeconomic groupings because it also needs the votes of other communities, such as Minorities, Dalits, and Kurubas, who supported Congress with large margins. Furthermore, given that JD (S) has been declining for decades in both the Assembly and the Lok Sabha, it will be interesting to see if this helps the BJP. As a result, the alliance appears strong at the top (among the top leadership), but it is unclear if this will translate to party cadres and voters.

Second, the BJP decided to choose B.Y. Vijayendra, the son of former Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa, as the State BJP President in November 2023. Vijayendra is a first-time MLA and previously held the positions of General Secretary and Vice-President for the State unit. The goal of this action is to strengthen the Lingayat vote base and position B.S. Yeddyurappa as a key campaigner in the 2024 elections. Top State BJP leaders like C.T. Ravi, V. Somanna D.V. Sadananda Gowda, and others are not happy about this approach either

because they feel that, many senior leaders are ignored. The appointment of R. Ashoka (Vokkaligas) as the Leader of Opposition in the State Legislative Assembly has been added to this. The leaders of North Karnataka are not happy about not being represented in the State's top position. In order to obtain 20 plus seats in the Lok Sabha, the BJP tends to consolidate the votes of Vokkaligas and Lingayats, as seen by these two actions. Furthermore, the BJP is aware that, in the State, Modi's larger-than-life leadership is more palatable than Rahul Gandhi's, especially among young people, Lingayats, and Brahmins.

Overall, since 2004, the BJP has outperformed the Congress in Lok Sabha elections, despite the latter's erratic vote share. However, things will be different in 2024 due to the State's Congress's potential comeback. Therefore, based on the current situation, it appears that the BJP will win more than 12 Lok Sabha seats and the Congress will win more than 10 seats, and JD (S) will end up 1-3 seats. Nevertheless, nothing is over in electoral politics, until the last vote is counted.

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Karnataka Assembly Poll 2023 – Is it Congress Resurgence in Indian politics?

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How over-confidence works even against in a supportive environment? Nobody expected a poor defeat of BJP and an astonishing victory of Congress in the Karnataka assembly election 2023. So, what went right for the Congress and wrong for the BJP? Is this simply people's mandate or something else has to be understood for the upcoming Loksabha election 2024? Why this mandate happened? Is this the growing popularity of Rahul Gandhi and relative weakening of Modi's popularity or any anti-incumbency factor worked against the Karnataka's Bommai government or mix of all these three ingredients? Answer could be any of them or all of them. Is this to be termed as revival or resurgence of Congress in the national scene once again or just a fluke which may not work for a longer period. For all these questions we need close x-ray of all the happenings which took place before and after the election.

Key words : Election, Bajrang Bali, Sub-regional, Identity politics, Bharat Jodo Yatra

The Karnataka Legislative Assembly election 2023 saw a voter turnout of 73.19%, the highest ever recorded in the history of the state. This election has been significant on two accounts - the first one is the unbelievable and stunning victory of Congress and BJP decline despite stability in vote share, and the other one is the voters' shifting choice from JD(S) to Congress. Out of total 224 seats, Congress secured 42.9 percent votes and 135 seats, while BJP having 36 per cent votes and 66 seats. The other party in the fray JD(S) could merely fetch 13.3 percent and 19 seats only, a decline of almost five percent. What does it all mean? What is particularly notable in the Congress victory? Are we going to witness a revival and the second innings of Congress under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi from a nadir of ten years? This may be, may not be. But what will happen to Modi's pledge of making *'Congress mukt Bharat'* way back in 2014 and its reiteration time and again. What will be the possible impact of this on the upcoming five assembly elections in 2023 and Loksabha election 2024. Let us have a closer look on Table 1 and 2 which throw some lights on the issue. The most pinching factor has been Congress performance of repeatedly getting more votes but less seats than BJP except in the 2013 election.

Table - 1 (Table 1 shows the Performance of Political Parties Since 1994 by Vote Percentage & Seats Won)

PARTY / YEAR	CONGRESS	BJP	JANTA DAL(S)	KJP, JD(U), JD	OTH
2023	42.88% (135)	36% (66)	13.3% (19)	——	7.82% (4)
2018	**38.04% (78)**	**36.22% (104)**	18.36% (37)	——	7.38% (5)
2013	36.59% (122)	19.89% (40)	20.19% (40)	9.79% (6) (KJP)	13.54% (16)
2008	**34.76% (80)**	**33.86% (110)**	18.96% (28)	—-	12.42% (6)
2004	**35.27% (65)**	**28.33% (79)**	20.77% (58)	—-	15.63% (22)
1999	40.84% (132)	20.69% (44)	10.42% (10)	13.53% (18) JD(U)	14.52% (20)
1994	26.95% (34)	16.99% (40)	——	33.54% (115)JD	20.52% (35)

Data source - Election commission of India

Interestingly enough, Congress performance in the years 2018, 2008 and 2004 was better than BJP on vote percentage term; but could muster less seats than its rival. Why this happened? Is the enigma of repeated Congress failures concealed in this phenomenon? Result of 2018 and 2008 at one hand and 2023 and 2004 on the other are somewhat similar as far as percentage of votes is concerned. But the 2004 result was very shocking for the Congress party. Despite a gap of almost seven percent in the vote share of the two parties, Congress was still behind by 14 seats. Same is the case of 2023 election. The difference between the Congress and BJP vote is almost 7 percent. But this time the seat difference is 69 in its favour. Let us have a look at the following table -

Table - 2 (Table 2 Showing the Performance of Congress and BJP in 2023, 2018, 2013, 2008 and 2004 Elections)

Seats & Percent / Year & Party		Seats Contested and Difference		Seats Won & Difference		Forfeited		Total % of Vote		Vote % in Seats Contested	
YEAR	PARTY	Seats contested	Diff of seats	Seats Won	Diff. of seats	Seats forfeited	Diff	% Votes garnered	Diff	% Votes garnered	Diff
2023	Cong.	223		135		11		42.88%		43.08%	
	BJP	224	1	66	69	31	20	36.00%	6.88%	36.00%	7.08%
2018	Cong	221		78		13		38.04%	1.82%	38.61%	
	BJP	223	2	104	26	36	23	36.22%		36.43%	2.18%
2013	Cong	223		40		110		36.59%		36.73%	
	BJP	224	1	122	82	23	87	19.89%	16.7%	20.07%	16.66%
2008	Cong.	222		80		11		34.76%		35.13%	
	BJP	224	2	110	30	31	20	33.86%	0.90%	33.93%	1.20%
2004	Cong.	224		65		7		35.27%			35.27%
	BJP	198	26	79	14	42	35	28.33%	6.94%	31.68%	3.59%

Data source - Election commission of India

This paper looks into the following questions –

1. How could Congress manage such a big victory and enhance its vote share to the highest in the last thirty five years?

2. Is Karnataka verdict an indication of Congress resurgence and beginning of BJP decline in Indian politics?

Impact of the Bharat Jodo Yatra

September 7, 2022 was the day when Rahul Gandhi started his historic *Bharat Jodo Yatra (BJY)* which covered almost 4080 kilometers from Kanyakumari to Srinagar across 12 states of the country for 146 days. The Yatra was launched by Rahul Gandhi on the slogan of alleged 'divisive politics' by BJP. Its main objective was to protest against the politics of *"fear, bigotry and prejudice",* and the economics of livelihood destruction, increasing unemployment and growing inequality. Interestingly, the yatra had the highest number of 21 days in Karnataka itself. Was it a well thought out plan and strategy by the Congress party keeping the Karnataka election factor in mind and winning maximum support from the masses? It is obvious that the party had a clear-cut strategy about the upcoming assembly election of the state. *Mysore, Bellary* and *Raichur* were the places initially identified by the party to gather its strength. Then the momentum spread to the whole state in a phased manner. If we observe these three places in the map, two distinct characteristics emerge before us. First, all these three places are almost vertically situated in the eastern part of the state neighbouring Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana; and at the same time it is situated in the central part of the southern region of the country. The Party also attributes its success at least in part to the success of the BJY: *The Congress party has attributed its success in the 2023 Karnataka election to the Bharat Jodo Yatra, declaring it the "clear winner" in the clash of narratives between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the nationwide foot*

march. Basavaraj Bommai, the chief minister of Karnataka, and BJP politician B. S. Yeddyurappa launched a counter march named "Jana Sankalpa Yatra" on 11 October 2022; this *yatra* visited 52 assembly constituencies as a political response to the Congress' *Bharat Jodo Yatra.* When Rahul Gandhi reached Kanyakumari on September 7 last year to embark on an ambitious cross-country march, there was skepticism all around, especially in his Congress party. His critics - both within Congress and outside - viewed him as a "non-serious" and "reluctant" politician. The obvious question on everyone's mind was whether he would be able to complete the *yatra*.

As per the schedule, Telangana's next polls for119 assembly seats is going to be held on 30, November, 2023. The impact of *yatra* is visible in the state. Congress, before and after *yatra,* is altogether looking different. Before, it was nowhere in the race, but after, it is very much in the race and expected to show a very good performance. ABP News - CVoter survey has given 48 - 60 seats and 39 percent of votes to the Congress as against 43 - 55 seats and 38 percent for BRS (Bharat Rashtra Samiti) (ABP survey 9th October & 4th November : 2023). In its second leg of survey, it has given 43 - 55 seats and 39.4 percent votes as against 49 - 61 seats and 40.5 percent. Therefore, it is really going to be a tough battle ahead for the BRS. During the last election in 2018, difference between TRS (Telangana Rashtra Samiti, now called BRS) and Congress vote share was 9 percent as they got 34 and 25 percent respectively. Within a very short span of six months, Congress has made wide inroads into the BRS votes. Interestingly and quite opposite, it was being widely believed that BJP would do better this time because there was space arisen out of discontent against the present regime continuing for the last nine years. Initially it seemed so, but very fast, the narrative of BJP reincarnation in Telangana has faded away due to Congress fast resurgence, grown out of Rahul Gandhi's long *BJY*. After *yatra*, he is now being touted as a serious politician connected with the people's cause instead of a honeymoon-period leader. The elections of *Mizoram* (7 Nov.), *Chhattisgarh* (7th& 17th of Nov.), *M.P* (17 Nov) and *Rajasthan* (25 Nov.) are also going to be held simultaneously. Vote counting will be done on 3rd of December. And in all these states, Congress prospect seems to be very high. (ABP News-C Voter survey 9th October and 10th November 2023). Congress is poised to do well and expected to regain its old political glory. That means the *yatra* effect is churning out into very fruitful results for the party. Chhattisgarh has 90 assembly seats. Congress is set to capture 44.8% of votes and 45 - 51 seats as against BJP tally of 42.7% and 36 - 42 seats. In 230 assembly seats of *Madhya Pradesh*, it is going to have 44.3% of votes and 118 - 130 seats as against BJP tally of 42.1% of votes and 99 - 111 seats. In the 200 assembly seats of *Rajasthan,* the tally is 41.7% and 67 - 77 for Congress as against 44.8% and 114 - 124 seats in the favour of BJP. Out of 40 assembly seats in *Mizoram*, it is 30.1% votes and 6 - 11 seats in Congress favour as against 34.7% votes and 17 - 21 in the favour of MNF (Mizo National Front).

Polarized Election Campaign and Reversal of Identity Politics

The issue of Lord Hanuman descended into Karnataka's political landscape as the BJP and Congress engaged in a bitter war-of-words. The fight was over Congress's poll promise of taking decisive action against communal outfits, including the *Bajrang Dal*. But how did the entire issue crop up? During the election, a vigorous campaign was launched on by BJP in the name of *Bajrang Bali* (Bajrang Dal & Bajrang Bali). The issue jumped out of nowhere at the fag end of the bitterly fought poll campaign and became one of the focal points. This was evident when Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge exclaimed, "*Jai Bajrang bali, Tod de bhrashtachaar ki nali*".He tried to mix two issues of corruption charges against the BJP government in Karnataka and the Bajrang Bali controversy. Before election, it was being widely believed that the present dispensation was a 40 percent government, meaning thereby anybody can get government contracts for various departments by giving forty percent commission.

In fact, it was BJP that brought up the issue of Bajrang Bali after Congress' pledge in its manifesto to place curbs on 'radical outfits' in Karnataka, including the Bajrang Dal. The promise to ban the Bajrang Dal sparked off a massive controversy with the BJP accusing the party of being anti-Hindu and an insult to Lord Hanuman. The Congress hit back at BJP, accusing the saffron party of equating the Bajrang Dal ban issue

with Bajrang Bali. The issue got highlighted when Prime Minister Narendra Modi chanted 'Bajrang Bali ki Jai' in public rallies across the state. In a bid to charge up the people ahead of the polling, in a rally in Vijayanagar district, PM Modi hit out at the Congress over the Bajrang Dal ban issue and alleged the party decided to 'lock up' devotees of Lord Hanuman.*"I have come to the land of Hanuman. I am fortunate that I got the opportunity to pay obeisance to the land of Hanuman, but see the misfortune that when I have come to pay my respect to Hanuman's land, at the same time, Congress in its manifesto has decided to lock up Lord Hanuman"* (Chakraborty, 2023). "First, they locked up Lord Rama and now they have vowed to lock up those who chant 'Jai Bajrang Bali,' he added. Earlier the VHP lashed out at Congress for equating Bajrang Dal with the PFI (Popular Front of India).

A series of attacks on churches and Christian institutions in coastal Karnataka took place in September 2008, shortly after the BJP came to power in the state. The BJP government led by B.S. Yeddyurappa had set up the Justice B.K. Somashekhara commission to investigate the attacks. In an interim report placed before the then-government in September 2009, the commission found involvement of right-wing groups like the Bajrang Dal in the attacks since Bajrang Dal leaders had held a press conference to claim responsibility for vandalizing churches in the Mangalore region. On 1 April 2022, five Bajrang Dal activists were arrested in Shivamogga district in Karnataka for allegedly attacking a Muslim trader for selling halal meat, even as the 'Boycott halal products' campaign by Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal intensified in the state.On 18 January 2022, a 20-year-old Muslim youth in Karnataka's Gadag district succumbed to stab injuries received during an assault. On 1 April 2021, a group of Bajrang Dal men allegedly attacked and stabbed a Muslim man who was travelling to Bangalore in a private bus along with his Hindu female friend, near Pumpwell. The Mangaluru city police arrested four members of the Bajrang Dal on 2 April and booked them for rioting, promoting enmity between communities, assault and attempting to murder. On 28 November 2021, a group of Bajrang Dal activists allegedly disrupted a prayer meeting at Jesus Prayer Hall in Belur town, on the grounds that "forced religious conversions" were happening at the place. On 1 June 2018, the Bellary police arrested three Bajrang Dal activists in connection to the suspicious death of *Hussain Abba* who was allegedly transporting cattle illegally (Chingakham, Dolly, 2023).

Keeping these events in mind, Congress promised in its manifesto to put an end to such activities. The voters took this pledge positively. Consequently, the card of identity politics failed. Not only the voters but even the party leaders and workers were skeptical about the success of the card. The Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai was clearly upset with this type of poll campaigning.

Congress Presidential Election - In between the *yatra* period, the election for party Presidentship took place on 17 October 2022 and the result was declared on 19 October. Mallikarjun Kharge, a Karnataka resident, was elected as the President securing by 7897 (84.4%) votes as against Shashi Tharoor's 1072 (11.42%) votes. Previously, Rahul Gandhi was the elected President of the party since 2017. But due to the very poor performance of the party in the 2019 Loksabha election, he resigned and Sonia Gandhi was selected as the interim President. When the election process was on, it was being rumoured that this election is nothing more than a mere formality. And once the deck was cleared that no member from Gandhi family would fight the election, several contenders like Ashok Gehlot, Digvijay Singh, K.N. Tripathi came out in open for the coveted post. In fact, this was a very good sign of internal democracy in the party. This election put an end to the remote-control culture existing in the party.

Defamation Case against Rahul Gandhi

Rahul Gandhi has been very vociferous on Adani issue in recent times. He alleged a kind of tacit understanding between Modi and Adani, alias *'Modani'*. It is believed that for all his allegations against Modi, a sleeping case of criminal defamation against Gandhi was hastily reopened in the lower courts of Gujarat. Based on his remark that *'all thieves share Modi surname'* allegedly made on 13 April 2019 at Kolar in Karnataka during an election rally in 2019, Gujarat MLA Purnesh Modi filed a criminal defamation case

against him. Interestingly, he himself had pleaded before the court to suspend the case for a year. On 23 March 2023, Surat court convicted Gandhi and sentenced him a two-year jail term. On the very next day, Loksabha secretariat issued a notice stating his disqualification from the membership of Wayanad Loksabha constituency under *'Section 8 of Peoples Representation Act, 1951'*. In July 2023, his bail plea was rejected by the Gujarat High Court.

But finally, on 4 August 2023, his conviction was stayed by the Supreme court, instructing Gandhi to maintain a cautious approach while addressing public rallies. It said that the alleged remarks by him were not in *'good taste'*. It notes "a person in public life is expected to exercise a degree of caution while making public speeches" (Rajagopal, 2023). But the most notable aspect of the judgement was that the three-judge Bench headed by Justice B.R. Gavai, pointed out that *'the Gujarat trial judge, other than severely admonishing Mr. Gandhi for his alleged remarks, failed to give even a single reason for serving the Congress leader with the maximum sentence of two years' imprisonment'* (Ibid). The court said the Magistrate had insisted on handing the Congress leader the severest punishment when the penal code allowed a choice between imprisonment and fine or both. This was a clear *'lack of reasons for punishment'*. *'The Gujarat High Court too'*, the Bench said, *'...skipped addressing the issue of complete lack of reasons for giving Mr. Gandhi the maximum punishment.'* The Bench noted that *"disqualification not only affects the rights of the individual but also that of the electorate he represents in the Parliament... the ramifications are wide"* (Ibid). The conviction and defamation were seen as a move to silence dissent and political opposition before the upcoming 2024 general elections. On 7 August a notification from Lok Sabha secretariat reinstated Rahul's membership to parliament.

The Karnataka voters perceived all these happenings against Gandhi in a very sympathetic manner. Results have always been very topsy-turvy for Congress despite getting more votes but less seats than BJP. The verdict of 2023 is historical in the sense that after 1989 Congress in 2023 not only broke its vote share record, but also secured more seats than the BJP leaving no scope for any kind of post-electoral defection.

BJP's Woes

It would be important to note that major pre-poll defections took place in the BJP before the elections. On 19 February 2023, H.D. Thammaiah joined Congress along with his supporters. On 9 March 2023, MLC Puttanna joined Congress. In a major blow to the party, former Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar quit BJP on 16 April 2023 and joined Congress the next day. Other leaders that left BJP before the polls include Laxman Savadi, M P Kumaraswamy and R. Shankar. Still the critics were skeptical about Congress victory. The argument was that, it is JD(S) which has actually lost and its voters have switched over to Congress. Data, of course, substantiates this reality. Since 1999, its performance has been superlative and has been carrying 18 - 20 percent of people's votes in the state. But this time, its vote share shrinked to a low of 13.31% and 19 seats only, thereby lowering its vote base by 5 percentage. In electoral politics, it is a basic fact that for survival, maintenance of 20 percent vote share is a threshold for a meaningful and bargaining status in politics. JD(S) case is almost similar to that of BSP in Uttar Pradesh. In Utter Pradesh assembly election 2022, BSP vote share has been pathetically reduced to a mere 12.88% from 22.23% in 2017. That means BSP has been reduced to a one-caste party. Voters decimated the JD(S) altogether and decided to align with the Congress for a bigger role in the national scene. Its decrease in vote share and seats both turned the election partially unipolar. It is also true that the Congress Party too has shrinked historically to its lowest in Uttar Pradesh with a vote share of 2.36% only.

Whatsoever the data shows, BJP cannot be confident enough simply because of its vote share stability. The State has been divided into six sub-regional electoral regions namely - *Bangalore - Karnataka, Bombay-Karnataka, Hyderabad-Karnataka, Central Karnataka, Coastal Karnataka and Southern Karnataka.* Of all these sub-regions, BJP lost everywhere except CoK and BK, but lost heavily in CK, HK and SK. The JD(S) could save its face only in Hassan district of SK. Vote share over time reveal that despite its growth in the

state, the BJP never obtained more votes than Congress. The closest was in 2008 around 34% and Congress has improved its vote share in every election since 2008. Because of the spatial distribution of the votes, the conversion of votes into seats has always been a seesaw in the state. This time, a large vote share gap between the two parties means a large gap in terms of seat share. With almost 7 percent of difference in vote share, Congress has twice the seats BJP got. To understand how the BJP lost so many seats with the same vote share, one needs to look at state-level performance. BJP gained votes in seats in which it under-performed in 2018 and lost votes in seats where it did well. This also works at the sub-regional level. BJP performance has more variation than the Congress, which performed an equal and stable performance in all the sub-regions. Let's watch Table 3 and 4 below.

Table - 3 : Showing the Percentage wise performance of three parties in the six sub-regions of Karnataka

No.	Sub-regions	BJP	Variation from 2018 votes	Congress	Variation from 2018 votes	JD (S)	Variation from 2018 votes
1.	Bangalore Kar.	41.77%	+5.3%	41.28%	+2.4%		-7.9%
2.	Bombay Kar.	41.87%	-2.4%	43.95%	+4.5%		-3.4%
3.	Hyderabad Kar.	36.76%	-1.8%	44.63%	+2.4%		-2.5%
4.	Central Kar.	34.36%	-7.3%	45.41%	+8.9%		-4.1%
5.	Coastal Kar.	48.46%	-3.1%	42.40%	+2.2%		-1.2%
6.	Southern Kar.	22.82%	+3.4%	40.60%	+6.5%	28.25%	-9.4%

Source – Lok Dhaba, Trivedi Centre for Political Data

Table - 4 (Seat wise performance of three parties in the six sub-regions of Karnataka)

No.	Sub-regions	BJP			Congress			JD(S)		
		2023	2018	Diff	2023	2018	Diff	2023	2018	Diff
1.	Bangalore Kar.	17	11	+6	18	18	0	1	7	-6
2.	Bombay Kar.	16	30	-14	33	17	+16	1	2	-1
3.	Hyderabad Kar.	9	12	-3	19	15	+4	2	4	-2
4.	Central Kar.	6	24	-18	27	12	+15	2	0	+2
5.	Coastal Kar.	13	16	-3	6	3	+3	-	-	-
6.	Southern Kar.	5	11	-6	32	15	+17	13	24	-11
	Seats -	66	104	-38	135	+80	55	19	37	-18

Source - Lok Dhaba, Trivedi Centre for Political Data

This time, 113 seats have changed hands. Congress 77, BJP 23 and JD(S) 11 took new seats. In 2018, it was 120 and mostly in favour of BJP and in 2013, it was 126 seats mostly in favour of Congress. The victory margin less than 5% is in 61 seats, between 5-10% is in 60 seats and more than 10% is in 103 seats. A total of 101 MLAs are first timers, meaning thereby almost 45% of the representatives are new-comers as against 63 and 28%in 2018. Among the first time MLA's 28 from BJP, 59 from Congress and 10 from JD(S). Generally after 2014, BJP has been the gainer in vote-seat relationship. In 2019 it had 38 percent of national vote but 56 percent of Loksabha seats. Congress had almost 20 percent votes but only 9 percent of seats. In 2014 polls, BJP had a 31 percent of votes but almost 52 percent of Loksabha seats. On the contrary, having almost 20 percent votes, Congress could capture only 8 percent of seats. But in Karnataka assembly election, a 43 percent vote share for Congress produced 61 percent of seats as against 36 percent vote share producing only about 30 percent of seats for BJP.

Karnataka Election and National Politics

Has Karnataka election a larger meaning for Loksabha 2024 election? Presently, the political landscape

in the country is almost evenly poised for both BJP and Congress along with its allies. The BJP has its own governments in 11 states including four in the north-eastern states. Congress has its governments in 4 states and 13 states are having non-BJP governments. On this statistical basis, following explanations could be deciphered. In *Ashutosh Varshney's* words, "first of all, we should abandon the idea that India is an "electoral autocracy", as V-Dem reports put in. India remains an "electoral democracy" where power can change hands. Elections may not be as free and vigorous as they can potentially be, but they remain sufficiently competitive". He argues that "Karnataka elections have basically unclogged the democratic process". BJP clearly seeks hegemony in India, flooding all political as well as non-governmental spaces with its presence. But it is unable to establish all-pervasive control. India's south and eastern coast have slipped out of its hold" (Varshney, 2023). The unclogging means only two things. First, the cadres of the Congress party will feel re-invigorated. A defeat in Karnataka would have massively dented the party's organizational morale, energy and spirit making the fight for 2024 infinitely difficult. Secondly, Congress is the second largest party in India having nearly one fifth of national vote. No other party gets even 5 percent. Many non-BJP, non-Congress parties are running state governments. They are regionally robust but nationally thin. BJP cannot be defeated without an alliance of non-BJP parties and no such alliance can be successful without the Congress (Ibid).

Conclusion

After Nitish Kumar's (Bihar Chief Minister) initiative, 28 opposition parties formed I.N.D.I.A (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) alliance. The alliance could be an apt answer for the upcoming elections and possibly an answer to the *hindutva politics* of BJP. The first meeting for the formation of alliance took place at Patna on 23 June 2023, the second one at Bangalore on 17-18 July and the third one at Mumbai during August 31-September 1. The recent publication of the first Report on 'Caste census' by the Bihar government, on 2 October 2023, has already started a Mandal-2 narrative in the country and several state governments have started demanding similar exercises in their respective states. It is first time in ten years that the BJP is facing a stiff challenge. It is toiling hard to counter the opposition with the *Ram temple'* and with the no other option theory. It can be concluded that the Karnataka mandate has far reaching implications for the upcoming elections.

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Bajrang Dal & Bajrang Bali:It (brigade of Hanuman) is a Hindu nationalist militantorganisation that forms the youth wing of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). It is a member of the right-wing Sangh Parivar. The ideology of the organisation is based on Hindutva. It was founded on 1 October 1984 in Uttar Pradesh, and began spreading more after 2010s throughout India, although its most significant base remains the northern and central portions of the country. Its slogan is *Seva, Suraksha, Sanskar* or *Service, Safety and Culture.* Bajrang Bali or Hanuman is the most revered deity in Hindu religious scripture who worked as the most trusted person of Lord Rama.

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Access to Education in Tribal Areas: Evidences from Mayurbhanj District of Odisha

Susama Hansdah &
Abhilash Thadathil

This paper delves into the educational status of children from the Munda, Kolha, and Santal tribes using household survey data from three blocks in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. The findings indicate a higher dropout rate in the 15-16 age group (secondary level) compared to the 6-14 age group (primary level). Available evidence from previous studies reveals that most of the tribal children engage in traditional occupations such as cattle grazing, wage labour, collecting firewood and NTFP, stone quarrying, mining, and home-based work such as processing forest products. The study found that the level of utilization of technology in the tribal areas has remained abysmally low. The paper advocates for the development of a tribe-specific policy by the state to address primary and secondary education challenges for tribal children in the country.

Key words : School Education, Dropout, Tribal Education, and National Educational Policy: 2020

Introduction

There are conflicting views on India's education policy with regard to tribal inclusion: from optimism to despair, from being viewed as an instrument of social transformation to a conservative bureaucracy that reproduces social inequality and from producing a techno-economic generation to the annihilation of indigenous values and traditions [Kumar, (1996), Jyotsna and Dhir, (2005), Vaidyanathan and Nair, (2001)]. However, there is a general consensus that the blueprint agendas of tribal[1] education policy failed to pay attention to the aspirations of Adivasi communities and their alienation from land and resources. As Emile Durkheim (1956) has argued, education has a distinctive societal meaning and needs to be located within the social context. This social context of education did not receive due attention and the policies led to either exclusion or adverse inclusion, whereby tribals have been displaced from their native land/space, reduced to wage labourers and thus subjected to 'adverse incorporation', into the larger economy and society (Xaxa and Nathan, 2012). Access to quality education seems to be a privilege in a hierarchical society like India. The rapid expansion of science and technology in India did not trickle down to the tribal communities. As political economist Arun Ghosh (1992) has noted, the most important element in education policy should be to make primary education accessible to all children. The Indian education system not only failed to address the element of 'inclusion' but also reproduced societal inequalities (Desai and Kulkarni, 2008; Subramanian, 2019).

The values that children internalise in the current education system and the potential within the system to comprehend the socio-cultural and spatial premises of their communities have been questioned by educationists and tribal communities (Jindal, 2015). The system often forces students from the most vulnerable sections to abandon the learning process mid-way. Therefore, the demand for an education system that takes into account the 'perspective from below' has found prominence in academic discourses [Pathak, (2002), Kumar, (1996)]. Therefore, the situation needs further enquiry in the wake of the National Education Policy (NEP, 2020).

The unidirectional system of education seeks to assimilate diverse cultures into a mainstream culture[2].

As N.K. Ambasht argues, "our school textbooks have no ethnographic account of any of the contemporary tribal societies living in our midst, resulting a total non-appreciation of the strengths of their cultures and values. This leads to a decreasing awareness of tribal identities, particularly those who undergo the process of schooling" (Ambasht, 2002:153). In this backdrop, by analyzing a household survey, interviews and case study methods, this paper tries to elucidate the problem of tribal students in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. It also examines the government's educational schemes.

The paper seeks to look beyond generalized assumptions implicit in phrases used to explain the dismal state of tribal education in India such as 'they are incompatible to this', 'lack of political will', 'because of poverty' and 'education policy of the neo-liberal state is succumbed to global finance capital'. These statements have some grains of truths but they also tend to obscure the underlying dynamics of tribal education.

Dilemmas and difficulties confronting tribal education, especially in the most impoverished regions, have persisted over more than seven decades of varying socio-economic and welfare policy contexts. The study shows that education has done little to empower tribal communities to address livelihood issues they encounter on a daily basis. The paucity of institutional [schools] reforms at the village level seems to be undoing the potential and goals of special education centres like *Ekalavya* Memorial Residential School (EMRS) and other schools.

The Study Area[3] **and the Communities**

With the Scheduled Tribes (ST) constituting around 60 per cent of its population, Mayurbhanj district exhibits a unique physical and socio-economic diversity. Situated in the north-east corner of the state of Odisha, the district shares inter-state boundary with Jharkhand and West Bengal. Influences of the culture of these two bordering states are well-marked in the adjoining areas of this district. The district is endowed with rich forest, which has provided a favourable physical environment and resource base for the tribal communities, who comprise 58.58 per cent of tribal population in the state (Census, 2011).[4]

The *Santals* are the largest and the most advanced tribe scattered all over Mayurbhanj district. Their main occupation is agriculture. The *Kolha* tribes have their own tribal dialect. Of the tribes of the region, *Kolha* are less proficient in the field of education. The *Mundas* have their own language and majority of them are settled agriculturalists and agriculture labourers and also depended on the non-timber forest produce (NTFP) for livelihood. Though *Santal* tribes are comparatively advanced in terms of education and occupational status than the other tribes, their spatial location 30 to 40 km away from the town, limits their access to the outside world. The *Munda* habitation areas are only 10 to 15 km away from the town. The *Kolha* tribes live 120 to 130 km away from the district headquarter Baripada.

Survey Design & Methodology

This study collected quantitative and qualitative data from 125 households of *Kolha, Munda* and *Santal* tribes in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha regarding children of school-going age (within the age group of 6-16 years) and their older siblings in these households. As the focus of the study is on school education, the emphasis was on children of school-going age. The survey was conducted only from rural households (with the help of a female translator) and was subject to the availability of and willingness of respondents. The study also draws upon secondary sources such as books, journal articles, government, and NGO reports. More recently, telephonic interviews were conducted with respondents   from the study area and other tribal dominant regions in the state to understand how school going tribal children were coping with difficulties brought by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 1 below shows the distribution of children of school going age from the household survey.

Three Communities	6-14 years	15-16 years	6-16 years
Munda	140 (27%)	24 (27%)	164 (27%)
Kolha	251 (48%)	34 (39%)	285 (46%)
Santal	134 (25%)	30 (34%)	164 (27%)
Total	525	88	613

Source: Household Survey: 2017

Out of 613 students, 525 (86 per cent) were in the age group of 6- 14 years and 88 (14 per cent) students were in the age group of 15-16 years. During the household survey, children were asked their current age and the number of years of schooling completed by them. We found four categories of children during the survey i.e. (i) continuing schooling, (ii) completed schooling (iii) dropout children and (iv) children with no schooling. A cross tabulation was used to understand the pattern of community-wise schooling attainment according to age for tribal children in the age groups of 6 to 14 years and 15 to 16 years.

Analysis

Educational attainment is measured in terms of the number of years of schooling completed. If a student joined a school at the age of 6 plus years and has continued schooling up to the age of 14 years, then he/she would have completed eight years of education by the end of 14 years. But if he/she joined the primary level of education at the age of six-plus years, but has not continued schooling up to the age of 14 years, then that student is considered as a dropout. Based on this criterion the number of dropout students is calculated for primary level student.

With regard to secondary level, if a student joined at the age of 15 years, and if he/she has continued schooling up to the age of 16 years, then that student would have completed secondary-level education by the end of 16 years. But if he/she joined a secondary level of school at the age of 15 years but has not continued schooling up to the age of 16 years, then he/she is considered as a dropout. Based on the above logic, the number of dropout students is calculated for secondary level student.

Age-wise Educational Status of Tribal children

Table: 2. Educational Status of school going age children in the primary (6-14 years)
*and Secondary Level** (15-16 years)

	6-10 (Lower Primary) & 11-14 (Upper Primary Level)		Primary Level (6-14 years)	Secondary Level (15-16 years)	Total (6-16 years)
	6-10	11-14	6-14	15-16 years	
Continuing	242 (99%)	165 (59%)	407 (77%)	38 (43%)	445 (72%)
Dropout	3 (1%)	33 (12%)	36 (7%)	36 (41%)	72 (15%)
Completed		79 (28%)	79 (15%)	14 (16%)	93 (12%)
No Schooling		3 (1%)	3 (1%)		3 (1%)
Total	245	280	525	88	613

Source: Household Survey: 2017

*As per the SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) norms children of 6 to 14 years are considered Primary Level students and also considered as I-VIII std. student.

** Similarly, 15 to 16 years children are considered as Secondary Level Student and also considered as IX-X std. student.

Table 2 shows that children begin to dropout from school from the age bracket of 6 to 10 years onwards, and the dropout rate increases with increase in age. A majority of children dropout before completing 7th or 8th standard. There may be full enrolment of children at the younger age group (6-10 years) as none of the children were reported to have no schooling. The dropout rate decreased over the years and it is higher among the children as age increases. Thus, there seems to be increasing enrolment and decreasing dropout over the time in the age group of 6 to 14 years. At the secondary level, it can be observed that children begin to dropout from the age of 15 years and most of the children who transitioned to the secondary level dropped out at the age of 16 years.

The RTE Act (2009) ensures free and compulsory education for all children within the age group of 6-14 years. Field evidence shows that drop out may be linked to several factors including the lack of provision of mid-day meal, at secondary level and difficulties in coping with the increased demands of the syllabus at secondary level. Children who are first generation learners are especially disadvantaged in terms of support from parents. Further, among families that depend on wage labour and farming, a section of parents may seek to augment family income by putting their older children to work. We next examine the community wise educational status in Table 3.1.1.

The following Table 3.1.1 shows that a higher proportion of *Kolha* children (10%) left school before completing primary education than *Munda* (4%) and *Santal* (4%). Evidence from the field survey (discussed later) also suggests that parents who are daily wage labourers had difficulty with coordinating their working hours with the children's school timing. Because parents leave for work very early, they were unable to ensure that children were attending school. At the same time, the school authorities do not inform the parents of non-attendance by children leading to higher dropout rates. *Santal* and *Munda* children do better in terms of retention at the primary level than *Kolha* children. *Munda* children do better in terms of completion of schooling followed by *Santal* children, but only two-third *Kolha* children in this age group completing school. However, unlike *Santal* and *Munda* children, a small proportion of *Kolha* children have had no schooling.

3. Community wise Educational Status at Primary Level & Secondary Level

	Table: 3.1.1 Munda						
	Primary Level (6-14 years)		Total (6-14 years)		Total Secondary Level (15 to years)		Total (15 to 16 years)
	6-10 Years	11-14 Years			15 Years	16 years	
Continuing	55	43 (51%)	98 (70%)		8 (89%)		8 (33%)
Dropout		5 (6%)	5 (4%)		1 (11%)	9 (60%)	10 (42%)
Completed		37 (43%)	37 (26%)			6 (40%)	6 (25%)
Total	55	85	140		9	15	24
	Kolha						
	Primary Level (6-14 years)		Total (6-14 years)		Total Secondary Level (15 to years)		Total (15 to 16 years)
	6-10 Years	11-14 Years			15 Years	16 years	
Continuing	123 (98%)	77 (62%)	200 (80%)		15 (71%)		15 (44%)
Dropout	3 (2%)	23 (18%)	26 (10%)		6 (29%)	8 (62%)	14 (41%)
Completed		22 (18%)	22 (9%)			5 (38%)	5 (15%)
No Schooling		3 (2%)	3 (1%)				
Total	126	125	251		21	13	34

	Santal					
	Primary Level (6-14 years)		Total (6-14 years)	Total Secondary Level (15 to years)		Total (15 to 16 years)
	6-10 Years	11-14 Years		15 Years	16 years	
Continuing	64	45 (64%)	109 (81%)	15 (83%)		15 (50%)
Dropout		5 (7%)	5 (4%)	3 (17%)	9 (75%)	12 (40%)
Completed		20 (29%)	20 (15%)		3 (25%)	3 (10%)
Total	64	70	134	18	12	30

Source: Household Survey, 2017

An interesting pattern is observed in the secondary school going age group of children. Here the completion rate of *Kolha* children is better than that of *Santal* children. Once the *Kolha* children overcome the initial hurdles and reach the secondary level, they fare on par with or relatively better than *Santal*. There could be several reasons behind this. The household location of *Kolhas* varies with some staying closer to the school and some closer to non-tribal houses. This may create conditions favourable for a section of *Kolha* children to complete secondary level of education. Another factor may be the economic mobility achieved after the state government decision to implement minimum support price (MSP) for non-timber forest produces (NTFP)[5] in 2014. Sumati (43 years), a *Kolha* mother form Rajabasa village in Sukruli block, pointed out how recent material changes such as access to two wheelers may be enabling access to school. "I bought a second-hand scooter last year. Traveling to the nearest town is very easy now. Often, I use it to drop my child at school as well. She [the child] likes the ride and seems very happy. My child's teacher told me that she scored well in the final examination." These changes are indicative of some of the changes that may be underway.

Factors Affecting Educational Attainment of Tribal Children

Available evidence from previous studies reveals that most of the tribal children engage in traditional occupations such as cattle grazing, wage labour, collecting firewood and NTFP, stone quarrying, mining, and home-based work such as processing forest products. The level of utilization of technology in the tribal areas has remained abysmally low. Lakshmi (2003), identified that the medium of instruction, the appointment of non-tribal teachers in tribal areas, and communication gap between the teachers and tribal children are the major causes of high dropout rates in tribal schools (Cited in Anbuselvi G & Leeson P. John). Sahu (2014) found that the physical location of the village, economic condition, attitude of the parents, lack of interest on part of the village education committees and teacher-related problems create obstacles in tribal education. K. Sujatha (2000), observed that ST children in Andhra Pradesh are unable to enroll in school, because of structural barriers such as difficult terrain, inaccessible locations, and spatially dispersed habitations. However, survey result reveals that economic condition of household, negative peer effect, hostel related issues, migration, failing in the examination and absence of midday meal for secondary level students affect the educational attainment of *Munda, Kolha* and *Santal* children in Mayurbhanj. Conversation with some secondary level age group dropout students revealed that day scholars, especially those who come to school covering 7-8 km daily, cannot go back home for lunch and at the same time, the students do not have enough money to buy lunch from *dhabas* (petty restaurants) near to their school. Parents also leave home before children's school time in for search of work and return only by 5pm, which creates negative impact on the educational attainment.

Educational Schemes

Many schemes are designed to prevent the dropout of school children. The centrally sponsored scheme like Mid-Day Meal (MDM)[6] plays a vital role to mitigate classroom hunger and ensure nutritional security of children in school. The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA)[7] and Right to Education Act (RTE Act)[8] also play a

significant role in mitigating the cost of education and in bridging the gap between boys and girls in attaining school education. There are schools, especially for girls from disadvantaged communities such as the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)[9] and National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)[10]. However, the numbers of KGBVs and NPEGEL are minimal. The majority of the girls from the disadvantaged communities are unable to take full advantage of these schemes. The schools are not well maintained by the government. The Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs)[11] is based on 'merit'. The students who are first generation learners find it difficult to get admission to these schools. Such schemes fail to recognize that the notion of 'merit' is highly related to the initial endowments in the caste-ridden Indian society (Subramanian 2019).

Special Schemes for Mayurbhanj District

The PESA (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas)[12] Act, 1996 has made it mandatory for the states having scheduled areas to make specific provisions for entrusting some powers to the tribes on matters relating to decision-making and development of their community. A centrally-sponsored government scheme of *Ashram[13]* schools exclusively for the ST children from elementary to higher secondary levels was initiated in the 1970s. Another special programme under SSA in Mayurbhanj District is the "*Mu Bi Padhibi* (I will also read)". The vision of this programme is to make the Mayurbhanj district free of out-of-school children. However, this policy has remained unsuccessful and no such programme has been implemented for the secondary level students to prevent them from discontinuing schooling. It should be noticed that even after the introduction of many schemes by both the central and state governments, universalization of elementary education of tribal children seems to be a distant dream. The dropout rate is disproportionately higher among the secondary level students (within the age group of 15-16-year-old students) in comparison to primary level students (within the age group of 6-14 years).

Education During Pandemic: Ground Realities

It is also essential to understand the current realities in the study area in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. The following are the excerpts of the telephonic interview[14] of the parents and students in the study area. With schools under lockdown, the state government decided to start online education for Class X students through the Diksha mobile application after April 14, 2020. State Minister of Education, Samir Ranjan Dash said students to be promoted to Class 10 this year will be imparted online teaching by teachers from their homes (Indian Express, 12 April 2020). As online classes fail to reach most students due to poor mobile connectivity, the Odisha government has turned to radio to reach out the children in remote areas of the state. The Education Department has launched classroom teaching through All India Radio (AIR) from the last week of September 2020 (The Hindu, September 27, 2020).

The following case studies and interviews with tribal families in Mayurbhanj district further elucidate the difficulties faced by the communities during the on-going Covid-19 pandemic. It is clear from the case studies that the pandemic has generated another set of challenges and seems to be exacerbating their vulnerabilities in attaining education.

Mantu is an 8th standard day scholar from Rajabasa village in Surkuli block. His school is six kilometers away from home. Until 15 September 2020 he has neither received books nor been able to attend the online classes. His parents are agricultural labourers, and he is a first-generation learner. His younger sisters (Rajani and Renta) are in 6th and 4th standards respectively. They also have not received any study material from the school. "I have lost my ration card, and we have not received rice amidst the lockdown. We are struggling to make ends meet. I asked the school authorities about the books and mid-day meals, but they cannot provide us the food grains. Because of the containment zone, our area was sealed. So, we did not receive anything", said his father (Personal communication, September 15, 2020).

Aladi Singh, an eleven-year-old sixth standard girl from *Munda* community in the village of Kuldiha, from Shamakhunta block, lives with her six-member family. She was attending the government school near

to her home until lockdown. Although she has received books from the school, she does not get guidance in studies either from parents or family members. She used to go to her classmate's house to attend online classes at the beginning but stopped going there after a small skirmish broke out between the two families over a land boundary dispute. Mid- day meal programme has also stopped. Before the lockdown, her mother used to work as a labourer near to their home. Her father occasionally worked as casual labour at a construction site twenty kilometers away from their village. However, at present, both of them are out of work, which has negatively affected their ability to provide for basic needs. Aladi has received only three kg of rice since the beginning of school closure, and her school stipend has not been transferred to her father's account yet. There is a provision of 100-gram rice per day for student who attends 1st to 5th standard and 150-gram rice for 6 to 8th standard students. Students who attend 1st to 5th standard and 6 to 8th standard respectively are also entitled to get 400 rupees and 700 rupees for vegetables and eggs, during the lockdown. However, students from remote location have not got the benefit from this facility.

Debesh, a 9th standard student from Tadakijharan village in Khunta block has a different story to tell. He belongs to a *Santal* family. His father Saroj Marandi was employed as a construction worker in Ranchi for three years. Now he is out of work; however, he managed to buy a refurbished smart phone at the cost of Rs.5000 for his son's online classes. But one year back he had borrowed an amount of Rs.20,000 from a local moneylender. The moneylender came to know about the mobile phone and started harassing Marandi to repay the loan. Finally, Marandi had to sell his four goats to repay the debt. "Right now, my son has a mobile phone, but we lost our goats. This phone needs to be recharged on alternative days because online class needs a minimum of 1.5 GB data for a day. For this we are always dependent on the local shop because we don't have the knowledge and capability to recharge our phones. Therefore, the shop owner often charges extra money over the recharge amount. I recharged his phone for one month, but now the money is exhausted, I don't know what to do now", said Saroj Marandi (Personal communication, September 17, 2020). At the end of September 2020, the much-promised government initiative like *Shiksha Samparka*[15] has not yet reached this village. Manjoj Kumar Nag, a high school teacher from Mayurbhanj district says, "The government knows that from the six million students in the state, only 2.2 million have access to education online. Though specific apps such as Siksha, Sanjog, Dakhyata, and Madhu have reached the middle and lower classes in the state well, the most vulnerable tribal communities in Mayurbhanj District are largely left out from these initiatives" (Personal communication, September 21, 2020).

Disruption of livelihood activities such as the collection of non- timber minor forest produces (NTFPs) is a major issue in Baria village in Sukruli Block at the time of the pandemic. Jharana (13) is a day scholar in a nearby school who belongs to the *Santal* tribe from Badajamuna village. She is a single child in her three-member family. Her family is solely dependent on NTFP for livelihood. March to June is the peak time for the collection of produces like *Mahua, Kendu* and *Amla*. For years the business was lucrative and provided for the needs of a small family. But the lockdown rendered the collection and sale of forest products difficult. As the local bazaars were closed, people were forced to sell these products to middlemen and money lenders at comparatively lower rates. Before the lockdown government-run, tribal societies were responsible for price-fixing. At present many such organizations have become dysfunctional because of strict lockdown regulations. "I have earned only Rs.1400 so far, and with this money, I have to look after my child and my diabetic wife. In these circumstances, I can't even think of buying a smartphone for my child that costs more than 5000 rupees", said Jharana's father Debendra Nath (Personal communication, September 24, 2020).

These case studies reveal the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the social and economic life of scheduled tribes in the district. The newly introduced educational measures by the state government have not yet reached the communities. Such a scenario might further exacerbate the educational backwardness of these vulnerable communities in the long run. The sample schools illustrate the disparate nature of educational establishment for tribal children, especially at the secondary level, where the dropout rate is remarkably high. Though qualified teachers were available and schools had average physical infrastructure, the number of

teachers was not adequate in the government schools for them to function properly. The schools also failed to provide extra- curricular opportunities, like sports and games. It is evident from the data that there is no substantial policy initiative to curb the drop-out rates - especially at the secondary level - of the most impoverished tribal children. The situation necessitates a relook into the newly designed policy framework, especially the National Education Policy 2020, in the context of tribal education.

New Education Policy 2020 and Tribal Education

The field survey shows that there is a plethora of unaddressed systemic issues within the tribal education system in Mayurbhanj district. Therefore, much was expected from the expectation from the New Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) (Ramaswami, 2019). The *Munda, Kolha* and *Santal* communities in Mayurbhanj district more or less represents the state of tribal education in different part of the country. The roadmaps offered in the Policy to address the dropout rates are significant. The document cites the 75th Round household survey by NSSO in 2017-18, which showed that the number of out of school children in the age group of 6 to 17 years is 3.22 crore. 'It will be a top priority to bring these children back into the educational fold as early as possible, and to prevent further students from dropping out, with a goal to achieve 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio in preschool to secondary level by 2030. A concerted national effort will be made to ensure universal access and afford opportunity to all children of the country to obtain quality holistic education - including vocational education - from pre- school to Grade 12 (NEP, 2020 p.10). This is promising, but the document is silent about the inclusion of the most disadvantaged categories like scheduled tribes, who need special attention.

The document also proposes online learning for the socially excluded at the *anganwadi* level, which is a pipe dream for communities like *Kolha* in Mayurbhanj because the availability and affordability of a high-speed internet is a mirage in their habitats[16]. The document self- contradicts when it comes to providing equitable access to education. At one place, the policy says education is a public service but it goes on to advocate philanthropic private participation, which one could see as a recipe for private education and can have disastrous consequences for vulnerable communities like the scheduled tribes. The rationale given for such a move is also questionable.

This document also proposes to implement a national repository of high-quality resources on foundational literacy and numeracy on the Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA) to serve as aids to teachers and help bridge any language barriers that may exist between teachers and students. As mentioned earlier, at present, many of the tribal students are unable to afford smart phones due to the economic situation of their parents. Parents from middle class families can afford to provide their children with smart phones to improve their foundational literacy and numeracy through DIKSHA. In the prevailing context tribal students may be isolated from education, since their parents are unable to provide such tools.

The NEP 2020 also reinstates the much criticized three language formula proposed by the draft new education policy in June 2020. It requests students from non-Hindi states to study Hindi and English apart from the regional languages. Students who wish to change one or more of the three languages they are studying may do so in Grade 6 or 7, as long as they can demonstrate basic proficiency in three languages by the end of secondary school. There is no specific mention about including indigenous tribal languages in the curriculum. In such a scenario, it will be difficult for such languages to get attention in the state level curriculum because most of the state governments would cite 'expense' and 'non-availability of the qualified teachers from the communities. As Krishna Kumar says, "the school system is forged to ensure total compliance, no matter how vast the system became diverse. Decentralisation was routinely favoured, but it did not touch the core aspects of education as a system" (Kumar, 2020).

The NEP, 2020 warrants further evaluations especially on its implications in the fiercely dysfunctional education system that exists in the most backward districts like Mayurbhanj. The NEP, 2020 needs further scrutiny and corrections especially in the context of the on-going pandemic especially in the context of over

80 per cent of the students studying government schools in five states - Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh. The schools in these states failed to deliver online lessons during the Covid 19 lockdown period (Oxfam India, 2020).

Conclusion

The foregoing discussions show the deep-rooted issues and dilemmas associated with the education of the most vulnerable tribal communities in the country. The dropout rate is disproportionately high for the secondary level (within the age group of 15-16) in comparison to the primary level (within the age group of 6-14 years). Many schemes have been introduced to improve the enrolment at the primary level, but such efforts are yet to be planned for the secondary level student. Household characteristics like economic condition, parental attitude towards the education, negative peer effect, and school characteristics like, failing in the examination, school distance etc. are the key parameters influencing the educational attainment of the most vulnerable tribal communities. For many years, these parametres have been overlooked while studying the dilemmas of tribal education at the regional level. The outbreak of an unprecedented pandemic has storm-tossed the livelihood of the tribal communities. Ironically, the much-expected NEP, 2020 does not acknowledge the existence of this crisis, nor does it suggest concrete steps to address it. More residential schools should be established in each district and be extended up to the higher secondary level in tribal areas by inculcating new imaginative practices adopted by other states to curb the dropout rates. It is appropriate to appoint more teachers, especially female, from a tribal background. At present, the policy per se is silent about these practical solutions. A two-fold strategy may be adopted to address these concerns. Firstly, there should be devolution of power to the government school administration and the PTAs to address the concerns regarding school functioning, enrolment, and drop-out rates. Secondly, what is needed is tribe-specific education programmes beyond *Ashram* Schools. The issues associated with secondary education have also to be specifically targeted.

Notes

1. This paper uses the words 'tribe' and 'adivasi' interchangeably to indicate the indigenous people of India.

2. Assimilation and isolation are the two major theoretical presumptions came up in post-colonial India for the welfare and inclusion of scheduled tribes. Proponents of the idea of assimilation, mainly sociologist G.S Ghurye, advocated for assimilating these spatially isolated and 'backward Hindu' communities into the mainstream through a slow and frictionless education mechanism. On the contrary, Verrier Elwin had the opinion that the deplorable and impoverished condition of Adivasis is due to their interaction with outside world, which had led them to indebtedness and alienation.

3. See Appendix 1

4. The total forest area of 4038 sqms in 2009 (39.16 per cent of the geographical area of the district)

5. In 2014 Odisha government initiated a mechanism for marketing of NTFP (Non-Timber Forest Product) through minimum support price (MSP) and development of value chain for NTFP under Tribal Development Co- Operative Corporation of Odisha (TDCCO). Currently 40 items, including popular NTFPs like *mahuva, tendu,* and honey, are covered under this scheme.

6. Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS): It is a school meal programme for school- age children nationwide to raise the level of nutrition of children and enable them to develop in a healthy manner.

7. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)*:* Launched in 2001 and aims to include universal access and retention, bridging of gender and social category gaps in elementary education, and achieving significant enhancement in learning levels of children.

8. Right to Education Act (RTE ACT) 2009 envisaged under Article 21-A, ensures every child's right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.

9.   KGBVs are residential upper primary schools for girls from the SC, ST, OBC and Muslim communities set up in areas of scattered habitations where schools are at great distances and attending those is challenge to the security of the girls. They were launched in July 2004.

10.   NPEGEL, is a is a special component of the SSA, launched in 2003, to provide additional support for enhancing girls' education over and above the investments for girls' education through the normal SSA interventions.

11.   EMRSs are centrally sponsored special residential schools for the most vulnerable tribal communities and are being managed by the central government since 1998.

12.   Thirteen districts in Odisha have scheduled Areas. The Act provide certain amount of autonomy to the tribal communities to protect them from exploitation by making Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayat centres of self- governance and has laid special thrust to empower Gram Sabhas which has not been done through any other Act in any State.

13.   The state has 766 *Ashram* Schools (Elementary level), 505 *Sevashrams* (Primary level), 19 Educational Complexes for providing education facilities to students belonging to the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), 2 Secondary Training School, 1 B.Ed. College and 13 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) managed by the Odisha Model Tribal Education Society (OMTES). As of 2019, the state SC/ST department runs as many as 6500 hostels with over 5.7 lakh students.

14.   Name of the interviewees are changed in the text to keep their privacy

15.   A state government initiated a programme that would send teachers to villages to teach children who has excluded from the government's online classes

16.   A report by the ministry of statistics in 2017 says that over 85 per cent of the households in rural India - that has a population of 500 million - do not have access to any digital device, including smartphones, tablets, laptops etc. For details see the reference.

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Appendix No. 1 Study Area

Source: Online

UDF's Victory in Puthuppally Assembly By-election-2023

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The result of the Puthuppally Assembly by-election was on expected lines, except for the unprecedented majority and the huge share of votes secured by the UDF. The sympathy wave generated by the sudden demise of the political patriarch of Puthuppally, Oommen Chandy, and the candidature of his son, Chandy Oommen, eminently explains the victory of the UDF. Simultaneously, other factors like the voting pattern of various Christian denominations and the allegation of corruption against the LDF government also seem to have figured in the electoral outcome. But it cannot be taken as a signal that would decide the future election out comes in Kerala or the pattern and dynamics of bipolar coalition politics in Kerala. The Puthuppally by-election result has been choreographed by the contextualities of Puthuppally politics rather than the larger context of Kerala politics.

Key words : Kerala Politics, Puthuppally, By-elections, Bipolar Coalition Politics, Development

Introduction

A by-election was necessitated in the Puthuppally Legislative Assembly Constituency after the untimely demise of Oommen Chandy, a towering Congress leader, a pragmatic consensus builder with great strategic acumen, and former Chief Minister, who received popular support from different sections of the Kerala society. Puthuppally has traditionally been a stronghold of the Indian National Congress, with Oommen Chandy emerging victorious from the Assembly constituency for the past 53 years consistently. Cashing in on Ommen Chandy's popularity in the constituency, the Congress fielded his son Chandy Oommen as the UDF candidate in Puthuppally. The LDF (CPIM-led) continued its experiment with DYFI leader Jaik C. Thomas, who has been contesting and making inroads into the constituency in the last two assembly elections. BJP Kottayam district president G. Lijin Lal contested as the NDA (BJP-led) candidate (Mehrotra, 2023).

Soon after the demise of Oommen Chandy, the Election Commission announced the election in early August and it was held on 5th September 2023. Out of the 175605 voters in Puthuppally assembly constituency, 89897 are female and 85705 are male (Notification issued for Puthuppally by poll, 2023). The by-election was characterized by the political context of intense competition and struggle between the ruling and opposition fronts over a multitude of issues, and consequently, it attracted great public attention through the high-decibel campaign. Chandy Oommen registered a thumping victory in the by-election with a massive majority of 37719 votes, breaking his father's record. The UDF candidate secured 80144 (61.38%) votes out of the total 130563 votes polled. The LDF candidate Jaik C. Thomas finished second with 42425 (32.49%) votes. There was a total of 7 candidates in the by-election, and only two candidates received a significant share of votes. BJP's Kottayam district president G. Lijin Lal (6558, 5.02%) who contested as the NDA candidate and AAP's Luke Thomas (835, 0.64%) managed to get only marginal votes (Table 1) and forfeit their security deposits (Election Commission of India, 2023). The article analyses this Congress victory, deciphers the factors and reasons behind it, and tries to find out its meaning and implications for the broader political dynamics of Kerala.

Table 1 : Puthuppally By-election Result-2023

Name of the Coalition/ Party		Number of Votes secured	Percentage of Vote secured	Majority
UDF	80144	61.38%	37719	
LDF	42425	32.49%		
NDA	6558	5.02%		
AAP	835	0.64%		
Others	201	0.16%		
NOTA	400	0.31%		

Source: Election Commission of India

Puthuppally Assembly Constituency and its Political Landscape

The Puthuppally assembly constituency, formed in 1970 is located in Kottayam district. It is an Assembly constituency consisting of 8 Panchayats including Akalakunnam, Ayarkunnam, Kooroppada, Manarcadu, Meenadom, Pampady and Puthuppally panchayats in Kottayam taluk and Vakathanam panchayat in Changanassery taluk (Chief Electoral Officer, Kerala, n.d.). Even when political power shifted alternatively between the LDF and UDF inconsecutive elections of the bipolar revolving door electoral dynamics of Kerala, this assembly constituency has always rewarded UDF, with Oommen Chandy representing it from 1970 till his death. Despite changes in Assembly delineation at various times, Puthuppally's politics was heavily influenced by Oommen Chandy for the last five decades. With a carefully built image of a good Samaritan, personal rapport with religious and other elites, soft personality, friendly behaviour and individual connections with the common people, Chandy was not just a political influence, but a social presence in Puthuppally. This personal influence and the good Samaritan image created by Chandy have always been the most important factor in determining the assembly election outcome in the constituency.

Table 2 : Assembly Election vote share 2011-2021

2021			
Name of the Coalition	**Number of Votes secured**	**Percentage of Votes secured**	**Majority**
UDF	63372	48.08%	9044
LDF	54328	41.22%	
NDA	11964	8.87%	
2016			
Name of the Coalition	**Number of Votes secured**	**Percentage of Votes secured**	**Majority**
UDF	71597	53.42%	26092
LDF	45505	33.20%	
NDA	15993	11.93%	
2011			
Name of the Coalition	**Number of Votes secured**	**Percentage of Votes secured**	**Majority**
UDF	69922	59.74%	33255
LDF	36667	31.33%	
NDA	6679	5.71%	

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Kerala

Despite this, the Left has managed to maintain its base in Puthuppally. In fact, a look at the vote percentage of LDF in the assembly constituency over a decade shows that it has been making incremental gains and inroads into the UDF bastion. In the 2021 assembly election, the LDF secured more than 41% of the polled votes, bringing Chandy's majority down to a four-digit figure (Table 2) (Chief Electoral Officer, Kerala, n.d.). In Local Self Government (LSG) and Lok Sabha General elections, where the Oommen Chandy factor is relatively muted, the LDF made more significant gains in Puthuppally. In the 2020 LSG elections, LDF was victorious in six out of the eight Grama Panchayats in Puthuppally and has also managed to win in Pallam, Pampady and Madapally Block Panchayats, which are part of the Puthuppally assembly constituency (Table 3) (State Election Commission Kerala, n.d.). For this reason,the political invincibility of Congress in the constituency was seriously challenged in the run-up to the by-election. The BJP, though managed to emerge as a competent force in a few regions of Kerala, has always been a minor player in Puthuppally, getting around 12% of the votes at its peak in 2016 (Table 2)**.**

Table 3 : Grama Panchayats of Puthuppally after 2020 election

Name of the Panchayat	Ruling Coalition
Akalakunnam	LDF
Ayarkunnam	UDF
Kooroppada	LDF
Manarcad	LDF
Meenadom	UDF
Pampady	LDF
Puthuppally	LDF
Vakathanam	LDF

Source : State Election Commission of Kerala

Puthuppally is also one of the few assembly constituencies in Kerala where Christians comprise more than 50 per cent of the electorate. Orthodox, Jacobite and Roman Catholics are the main denominations. Pentecostals also live in a few areas. Major Christian pilgrimage centres of Kerala, such as Puthuppally St. George and Manarkad St. Mary's churches, are located in this constituency. The conflict between the Orthodox-Jacobite churches played a significant role in influencing the politics of Puthuppally. Disputes over the ownership of various Churches have been an important religious and social issue, and different fronts have tried to exploit the issue to make political gains expediently (Jovial, 2023).

It is clear from the political history of Puthuppally, especially in assembly elections, that it bypassed the pattern of electoral trends in Kerala by remaining the personal bastion of Oommen Chandy. Oommen Chandy has always been the key factor in the elections in Puthuppally. At the same time, it must be noted that in Lok Sabha and local body elections, the LDF has an impressive record and has challenged Oommen Chandy's dominance, indicating the strong political base of the Left in the constituency.

Key Factors and Campaign Issues in the By-Election

Given this political context, the by-election campaign was destined to be an intense battle between the ruling and opposition fronts. While the LDF took this as an opportunity to infiltrate and expand its dominance in a Congress bastion, the UDF sought a victory to assert its political legitimacy and relevance against the Pinarayi Vijayan led LDF government, which had received a historic second mandate in Kerala (Pinarayi Vijayan sworn, 2021). Hence, the election campaign was active and eventful from day one, with the top leaders of both fronts, including Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Leader of the Opposition V D

Satheeshan, participating in it. Particularly the Congress, which is usually plagued by internal group tussles and organisational weakness, swung into action, announced Chandy Oommen as its candidate without any delay and channelled its organisational strength behind him in a unified way.

Given the history of political dominance and personal charisma of Oommen Chandy in Puthuppally, he was the single most important factor in the election. Even in his absence, he loomed large in the political discourse surrounding the election campaign. The by-election was declared soon after the death of Oommen Chandy, who was respected and loved by the people of Puthuppally. Lakhs of people paid their respects to Oommen Chandy in the posthumous mourning procession, a carefully organised political spectacle, stretching from Thiruvananthapuram to Puthuppally St. George Church. People who loved Oommen Chandy and party workers came to the grave as pilgrims and flocked to St. George Orthadox church, Puthuppally, where he was laid to rest, raising his image to that of a saint (Hiran, 2023). The by-election was announced in a situation where the memories of Oommen Chandy were still reverberating in Puthuppally. Naturally, Oommen Chandy, and political positions and matters related to him were the most important topics discussed during the by-election. Chandy Oommen, being the political heir of Oommen Chandy, received all the advantages of this discourse.

To gain the upper hand, the Left camp tried to attack Oommen Chandy's image by linking it to the development agenda of the LDF government. It argued that Oommen Chandy, despite having represented Puthuppally for more than 50 years and having been at the top office of the Chief Minister, failed to reward the constituency with basic necessary infrastructure and meet the people's developmental aspirations. The LDF government promised to meet the necessary developmental requirements of the constituency, which Oommen Chandy left lagging behind. The UDF countered and appropriated this debate by questioning the very meaning of development. It argued that the development of Oommen Chandy was his accessibility to the ordinary people for any tangible need and help as against flashy infrastructure (Puthuppally by poll, 2023).

Performance of the LDF government and allegations of corruption against the CM and his family figured in the election campaign by the UDF. The LDF had a tough time in defending the allegations against CM'sdaughter and the governmentin general. The financial difficulties of the state government and its failure to distribute welfare pensions and pursue other welfare schemes were highlighted in the campaign trail.

The presence of traditional and new social media has made the Puthuppally by-election a dynamic and vociferous one. Given the importance of personal image in this election, it gave way to personal attacks and political slugfest. The propagation through social media often became extreme. The candidates of the major fronts, Chandi Oommen of the UDF and Jaik C. Thomas of the LDF, and their families were subjected to severe cyber-attacks. Legal actions were also taken against both sides for the fake and abusive cyber-attacks (Online harassment of women politicians, 2023). Thus,cyber-attacks and counterattacks through social media were another major issue during the by-election. At the same time, Oommen Chandy was also acquitted in the solar scam case[1], which had cast a dark shadow on his political career. Consequently, the UDF argued that the solar case was a fabricated charge to defame Oommen Chandy and he was a real victim of the political trickery (CBI report points to conspiracy, 2023).

As pointed out earlier, the conflict between the orthodox-Jacobite churches has a significant role in the politics of Puthuppally, where more than 50% of the constituents are Christians. This church dispute was the main reason for the significant reduction of Oommen Chandy's majority in the 2021 elections, who belongs to the Orthodox denomination. The dispute between the Christian churches surfaced as a major issue of discussion during this by-election as well, where the LDF candidate Jaik C. Thomas has a family background of the rival Jacobite group. Additionally, the Kerala Congress (M), which had jumped to the LDF camp, influenced the Roman Catholic community in Ayarkunnam and Akalakunnam panchayat, making the by-election context polarised along denominational lines.

The merit of the candidates was a subject of heated debate during this by-election. All the three major fronts fielded energetic and educated young candidates. UDF candidate Chandy Oommen is a foreign university graduate, Supreme Court lawyer and Youth Congress national office bearer. LDF candidate Jaik C. Thomas is a research student, an accomplished orator, a colourful presence in student-youth struggles, and a national office bearer of DYFI. NDA candidate G. Lijin Lal was also an outstanding candidate. During the election, the positions and opinions of the candidates on various issues were discussed in the interviews through the visual media. War of words ensued between the candidates on many issues like government activities, the development of Puthuppally and the flow of pilgrims to Oommen Chandy's tomb.

Reasons for the UDF victory

There are many reasons behind the UDF's historic victory in this by-election. The Oommen Chandy factor is the most important among these. Oommen Chandy was greatly accepted in the Assembly constituency and had a personal rapport with the constituents. Following his death, a set of events was carefully orchestrated to raise his image to sainthood among the common people. This was the single most important factor that helped his son, Chandy Oommen, to win the election with a record margin. The wave of sympathy caused by Oommen Chandy's death had favoured the UDF immensely (Chandy Oommen wins by-election, 2023). Moreover, the by-elections were announced soon after the death of Oommen Chandy. The Election Commission announced the by-elections much earlier than usual, benefiting the UDF with the immediate memory of Oommen Chandy. During the election, the court acquitted Oommen Chandy in the solar case. With this, the UDF raised the argument that the solar case was a conspiracy by the then opposition, the currently ruling LDF, and political leaders who were hostile towards Oommen Chandy.

The most significant campaign of the LDF in this election was regarding the development-related issues in Puthuppally, attacking Oommen Chandy. However, the UDF successfully asserted that Oommen Chandy was able to establish several central and state schemes and institutions in the constituency and appropriate the development discourse to work in its favour.

Puthuppally is a constituency dominated by the Christian religious sects. The Orthodox-Jacobean church dispute[2] has been influencing the electoral politics of Puthuppally for a long time. This ecclesiastical dispute led to the concentration of Jacobite votes against Orthodox ecclesiastic Oommen Chandy in the 2021 Assembly elections. Moreover, despite being a sagacious politician, the Orthodox Church also felt that Oommen Chandy did not show enough interest in resolving the church dispute. The resulting polarisation along the denominational lines and the split in the Christian votes was one of the reasons for the significant decrease of Oommen Chandy's majority in 2021. In 2023 by-elections, on the contrary, there was a consolidation of Christian votes belonging to all the denominations in favour of the UDF. The wave of sympathy following Oommen Chandy's demise and the inability of the LDF to permanently resolve the church dispute led to this consolidation (Anand, 2023). The Christian vote aggregation formed against the BJP because of the Manipur riots must have also benefited the UDF. This was even the case in KC(M) dominated Ayarkunnam and Akalakunnam panchayats, where Roman Catholic votes are significant. Thus, Chandy Oommen received more votes across different denominations and in all the panchayats, as evident from Table 4.

Table 4 : Panchayat-wise comparison of majority

Name of the Panchayat	Year	Leading Coalition	Majority
Akalakunnam	2021	UDF	1818
	2023	UDF	4151
Ayarkunnam	2021	UDF	1293
	2023	UDF	5487

Kooroppada	2021	UDF	1081
	2023	UDF	4364
Manarcad	2021	LDF	1213
	2023	UDF	3716
Meenadom	2021	UDF	838
	2023	UDF	2333
Pampady	2021	UDF	342
	2023	UDF	5361
Puthuppally	2021	UDF	2399
	2023	UDF	5830
Vakathanam	2021	UDF	1669
	2023	UDF	5425

Source: Chief Electoral Officer, Kerala

Puthuppally is traditionally a UDF stronghold. This time, the political situation was very favourable for the UDF. The UDF faced multiple political challenges in Puthuppally in the 2020 Local Self-Government elections and the 2021 Assembly elections. The Christian Church dispute and the Kerala Congress (M)'s swapping of fronts were the main reasons for the UDF's crisis in the constituency. But the aforementioned issues did not harm the UDF in this 2023 by-election. They managed to win the support of both UDF core votes and neutrals. Once again, the ever-UDF-leaning voters of the constituency laid the foundation for Chandy Oommen's historic victory.

Candidates of UDF and LDF and their family members have been subjected to severe cyber-attacks through social media which are fake and obscene. The cyber cadres of both fronts deliberately led a campaign of defamation. LDF candidate Jaik C. Thomas's father and pregnant wife were subjected to cyber-attacks. Along with this, UDF candidate Chandy Oommen and his sister Achu Oommen were victims of severe attack through social media. These cyber-attacks became a debate in the election and influenced the outcome. But these cyber-attacks benefited the UDF more. The campaign against former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy's family, a victim of LDF's political deception in UDFnarratives, has strengthened the case in favour of Son Chandy and the Congress.

The UDF faced a major political setback in Kerala in the 2021 assembly elections. But later, the UDF made a political comeback through a change of leadership and organizational reforms. As a result of this, the UDF was able to win the Thrikkakara by-election in 2022 with a huge majority (Congress' Uma Thomas posts thumping win, 2022). Naturally, the UDF, which was strengthened as a political front, was leading in Puthuppally since the candidate selection. In Puthuppally, the UDF was able to maintain proper planning and discipline in its campaign. Leader of the Opposition VD Satheesan spearheaded the election campaign, which saw equal participation of senior and young leaders. Contrary to the norm, the Congress and the UDF worked as a single unit, which resulted in Chandy Oommen's massive victory.

Even though it was a by-election that the whole of Kerala was paying attention to, the BJP did not have much hope in Puthuppally. It was a completely passive political campaign from the side of the BJP. The fact that none of the senior leaders was fielded as the candidate, and star campaigners did not come to campaign clearly shows BJP's apathetic attitude in the by-elections. Due to this, BJP's votes have decreased significantly. The BJP managed to secure only 5.02 % of the votes. In Puthuppally, the UDF got a political gain due to the decrease in BJP's vote.

The LDF candidate, who is well-known in Puthuppally, raised political and developmental issues of the constituency in this election. Jaik C. Thomas has often excelled in campaigning and has more political clarity over the UDF candidate. Moreover, the Left Front was able to co-opt traditional leftist votes due to systematic campaigning activities directly led by senior LDF leaders including the Chief Minister. In short, due to the excellence of the candidate and the organizational capacity of the LDF, the LDF was able to retain its core votes in Puthuppally despite the political storm in favour of the UDF.

Conclusion

Bipolar coalition politics has been the dominant electoral trend in Kerala for the past 60 years. The two coalitions are the UDF led by Indian National Congress and the LDF led by CPI(M). For the last 40 years, Kerala had witnessed the bipolar revolving door political system, where the mandate is rewarded to the two fronts alternatively. But contrary to this usual pattern, the LDF won a consecutive term in the 2021 assembly elections. This trend can be considered as a unique change in Kerala politics. The UDF as a political coalition disintegrated in the 2021 assembly elections due to several factors, such as Congress's organizational problems, Kerala Congress (M)'s change of coalition, the Muslim minority vote shift favouring the Left in some regions, and the BJP's infiltration into traditional Congress votes. With the 2021 elections, the BJP-led NDA coalition had consolidated itself into a competitive third political coalition in Kerala. These movements in Kerala politics put the UDF in a political crisis. But the UDF, since then, seems to have woken up to the reality and has improved its political base through various measures. Apart from the specific and local factors in the by-election, UDF was able to achieve a great victory in Thrikkakara because of this. A similar victory was achieved by the UDF in Puthuppally. This political comeback of UDF is a strong proof that bipolar politics still prevails in Kerala. The fact that the NDA has not been able to make enough political progress so far is indicative of the nullification of the possibilities of Tripolar politics in Kerala.

The resounding victory of the UDF in Puthuppally cannot be judged as a trend that ripples across Kerala. UDF's success in Puthuppally should be considered as a specific case contextualised around the Oommen Chandy factor. The people of Puthuppally, traditionally a Congress constituency, had an unbreakable bond with Oommen Chandy. The huge success of the UDF was largely due to the outpouring of emotion and sympathy following his demise. The feeling that Oommen Chandy was politically witch-hunted in the solar case, Chandy Oommen's candidature, the media's favourable attitude towards the UDF and the decrease in BJP's votes have all contributed to the UDF's massive victory in Puthuppally. The Christian vote consolidation in favour of UDF in this by-election despite the Kerala Congress(M) shifting side to the LDF camp is also important. The high decibel campaign of the LDF focused on developmental achievements have not struck chord with people. Hence, it could be observed that the unprecedented majority of the UDF also could be indicative of the sympathy wave and the wider anti-incumbency elements against the government. That explains the huge margin and share of votes UDF received from several corners that it was not able to break in the past.

Notes

1. The "solar scam" in Kerala, refers to a scandal that unfolded in 2013 involving fraudulent activities related to solar energy companies. It centered around allegations of financial fraud and sexual exploitation, implicating several individuals, including political figures.

2. The Orthodox-Jacobite dispute in Kerala primarily revolves around the leadership and control of certain Syrian Christian Churches. Efforts have been made over the years to find a resolution to the dispute, but it has remained a complex and sensitive issue. Legal battles have taken place, and attempts for reconciliation have occurred with varying degrees of success. The issue has not only been confined to religious matters but has also had social and political implications in the state of Kerala.

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