



Dr. Sandeep Shastri
Pro Vice Chancellor,
Jain University

KARNATAKA IN ELECTION MODE: LOOKING BACK.....LOOKING FORWARD

The formal announcement of the election schedule in Karnataka by the Election Commission came with its share of drama and controversy. A media house and leading spokespersons of the BJP and Congress were at the centre of a controversy where they 'jumped the gun' and declared the date of the election much before the Commission gave out the time table.

As parties and candidates prepare for the rough and tumble of what looks to be a very acrimonious campaign and keenly contested election, it may be useful to look at some of the lessons from the previous State Assembly elections of 2013.

PRESENCE OF KEY PLAYERS ACROSS THE STATE

While the Congress emerged victorious the last time around and the BJP and JD(S) won an equal number of seats, the spread of their electoral presence provides interesting insights. Although the Congress won 121 seats, it was in the second position in another 63 seats, thus making it a principal contestant in over eighty per cent of the seats. On the other hand, while the BJP won 40 seats it came in second in another 57 seats making it a principal contestant in just over forty percent of the seats. In the case of the JD(S) which won 40 seats, it came in second in 49 constituencies, thus making it a principal contestant in slightly less than forty percent of the seats. It is also relevant that the KJP, a splinter group of the BJP led by their current Chief Ministerial candidate B. S. Yeddyurappa came in second in as many as 35 constituencies besides winning 9 seats, making it a principal contestant in close to twenty percent of the seats.

ACROSS THE REGIONS

For the purpose of political analysis, Karnataka has traditionally been divided into six regions – a) Hyderabad Karnataka region which consists of those parts of the state which were part of the Nizam of Hyderabad's territory prior to integration (31 seats); b) Bombay-Karnataka region which consists of the region that was part of the Bombay presidency during British rule (50 seats); c) Central Karnataka – the region of central Karnataka which was a part of the Princely State of Mysore (35 seats); d) Coastal Karnataka – the coastal districts of the state (21 seats); e) Bangalore, covering both the city and what is considered as rural Bangalore (36 seats) and f) Southern Karnataka, the heartland of what was the princely state of Mysore (51 seats).

The Congress has traditionally done well in all the regions of the state. The reason why the BJP is making a serious attempt to register its presence in the Southern Mysore region is essentially to widen its electoral base which has been otherwise confined to Mumbai Karnataka, Hyderabad Karnataka, Central and Coastal Karnataka besides Bengaluru city. On the other hand the JD(S) has largely been limited to the Southern Karnataka politics which has been witness to the fact that a party that is not able to do well in Bombay-Karnataka and Hyderabad

-Karnataka regions is not able to emerge as a ruling party.

THE CONCEPT OF `SAFE SEATS` IS FAST DISAPPEARING AND THE TRACK RECORD OF SITTING MLAs

The inability of parties to retain seats that they won in previous elections is also indicative of the structure of political competition in the state. In 2013, the Congress party was able to retain only 50 of the 79 seats it won in 2008. It was not able to retain over one thirds of the seats (29 of 79) that it won the last time around. To come to power it wrested 71 seats from other parties. The JD(S) was able to retain less than half the seats it won in 2008. In the case of the BJP 33 of the 40 seats it won were those it had secured in 2008. This inability to retain seats is also linked to the performance of sitting MLAs. Over ninety per cent of the sitting MLAs (209 of 224) contested the 2013 polls from the constituencies they had won from the last time around. A marginally higher number of sitting MLAs were defeated rather than re-elected. This is directly linked to the dismal performance of the BJP which nominated 81 of its sitting MLAs. Of them only a little over one-third were elected. In the case of the Congress, it nominated 74 of its sitting MLAs of whom two thirds were elected and as many as 23 were defeated. The JD(S) re-nominated 26 sitting MLAs and over half of them were defeated.

EMERGING SOCIAL COALITIONS

Caste politics has often been the prism through which Karnataka politics has been explained. The crucial role of the two dominant castes – Lingayats and Vokkaligas in influencing the politics of the state has been well documented. There has been no Legislative Assembly in Karnataka in which the dominant castes do not account for a majority of the legislators. The 2018 election will see a new factor - the move of the state government to accord the status of a minority religion to the Lingayats coming to the fore.

In 2013, the Congress strategy of renewing its non-dominant caste coalition appears to have paid dividends. The party was in a position to consolidate its support among the non-dominant OBCs, Scheduled Castes and Muslims. In the case of the crucial Lingayat vote, there was a clear split of the vote between the BJP and KJP with the Congress too increasing its vote share in this dominant caste. The JD(S) continued to take the largest chunk of the vote among the other dominant caste the Vokkaligas, while the Congress witnessed a marginal decline in its share of the vote among the Vokkaligas, as compared to 2008. Here again, the JD(S) garners a much higher proportion of Vokkaliga votes in constituencies where the Vokkaliga community had a significant political presence.

While 2018 is clearly a `race with a difference` some of the trends from 2013 do provide a context for the coming elections.

UP Results Will Have No 'Direct' Impact On Karnataka Polls: Parties

- *The Economic Times*

March 15, 2018

The Uttar Pradesh Lok Sabha bypoll results will have no "direct" bearing on the coming assembly polls in Karnataka where the electoral dynamics is different, say political parties. The BJP suffered an electoral reverse, losing the Gorakhpur seat which Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had retained for five terms, and the Phulpur seat. Political analyst Dr. Sandeep Shastri said the bypoll results would not have any impact on the Karnataka elections as the fight would be directly between the BJP and the Congress. The Karnataka BJP had planned to use Yogi Adityanath as its star campaigner for the upcoming elections. He has already toured the state thrice in the run-up to the elections.

Read more at:

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/up-results-will-have-no-direct-impact-on-karnataka-polls-parties/articleshow/63319469.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

It's Raining Parties in Karnataka this Election Season; Congress Sees BJP Hand

- *D P Satish*

March 19, 2018

On the day of Ugadi a new political party was born in Karnataka. Launched by Anupama Shenoy, Former Karnataka Police officer, the outfit named 'Bharatiya Janashakti Congress' or BJC wants to take on the ruling Congress and main opposition BJP in the Assembly polls likely to be held in May. In last November, Nowhera Sheikh, a businesswoman, launched a political party to empower women known as 'All India Mahila Empowerment Party' (AIMEP). Veteran Kannada activist and former MLA Vatal Nagaraj has also launched a new political party called 'Karnataka Praja Samyukta Ranga' to fight the Assembly polls. Aam Aadmi Party founding member Yogendra Yadav's 'Swaraj Abhiyan' has decided to contest from Melukote in Mandya district this time.

Read more at:

<https://www.news18.com/news/politics/its-raining-parties-in-karnataka-this-election-season-congress-sees-bjp-hand-1694311.html>

Karnataka Election Fever: Social Media Turns Mercurial

- *The Economic Times*

March 20, 2018

For the first time in the state, all the three parties, the Congress, the BJP and the JD(S) appear to have taken social media as an effective tool. While the BJP and the Congress have set up their war rooms, in Malleswaram and on Cunningham Road respectively, by deploying a mix of professionals and party workers who spread messages on WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube, the JD(S) has a small team of volunteers with IT background handling social media at the party's head office in Seshadripuram. The high penetration of social media in Karnataka makes it an unmissable platform for political parties. Balaji Srinivas, the convenor of the BJP's social media cell, estimates that of the 4.9-crore voters in Karnataka, 3 crore have access to the internet. The BJP's 40-member cell mostly has IT professionals planning strategy, creating content, distributing and monitoring it. The Congress's 25-member cell is a blend of party workers and professionals.

Read more at:

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/63374581.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

Karnataka Lingayat Religion Row: Congress' Decision A Blow for BJP? Updates

- *Business Standard*

March 22, 2018

Ahead of the state assembly elections, the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah-led Karnataka Government accepted the suggestions of Nagamohan Das committee declaring that the Lingayat community be a minority religion separate from Hinduism. The suggestion which has been accepted under section 2D of the state Minorities Commission Act will now be sent to the Centre for the final approval. The BJP slammed the Karnataka government for its decision to recommend separate religion status for Lingayats, accusing Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of "playing with fire for vote back politics". They have accused the Siddaramaiah government of dividing society to draw political mileage ahead of the assembly elections. Lingayat strongman and state BJP chief B S Yeddyurappa has been saying that his party would not allow efforts to "divide" the community.

Read more at:

http://www.business-standard.com/article/politics/karnataka-polls-siddaramaiah-accepts-lingayat-demand-for-separate-religious-status-10-highlights-118031900672_1.html

Karnataka Assembly Elections: Is JD(S) Having a Secret Alliance with BJP?

- One India

March 22, 2018

Congress President Rahul Gandhi during his two-day long Janashirvada Yatra in Hassan alleged that the JD(S) has some sort of secret pact with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Congress chief added that the JD(S) is working to ensure the BJP's victory in the upcoming elections. The elections to the 224-member Karnataka Assembly are likely to take place between the last week of April and the first week of May. Back in 2006, the JD(S) and the BJP came together to form a coalition government in Karnataka. The JD(S) has officially made alliances with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) for the upcoming Karnataka Assembly elections. Political experts say that the JD(S) will play an important role in the government formation in Karnataka after the election gets over.

Read more at:

<https://www.oneindia.com/india/karnataka-assembly-elections-is-jd-s-having-secret-allianc-2663536.html>

Karnataka Assembly Elections 2018: What Parties Believe Will Work for Them?

- Business Standard

March 22, 2018

It is widely expected that all the parties will give tickets to younger and fresher faces, along with their sitting MLAs. This time around the Karnataka State Assembly Elections will be keenly fought with all the parties believing they have a real shot at power. Thus all parties will leave no stone unturned to achieve desirable results. Both the Congress and the BJP have had good electoral experiences in the recent past with BJP winning in the North East and Congress performing better than expected in Gujarat and winning by-polls in MP and Rajasthan. JD(S) is the one who has been working the most quietly of all the three players.

Read more at:

http://www.business-standard.com/article/elections/karnataka-assembly-elections-2018-what-parties-believe-with-work-for-them-118032200245_1.html

Gowda Dares Siddaramaiah For a 'Political Wrestling Bout'

- The Hindu

March 22, 2018

Irked by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's broadside against the Janata Dal (Secular) and former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's family at a Congress rally in Hassan on March 21st 2018, the JD(S) supremo on March 22nd 2018, dared Mr. Siddaramaiah for a "political wrestling bout". At a party function in the Chamaraja Assembly constituency, Mr. Gowda cautioned his political adversaries against dismissing him and dared Mr. Siddaramaiah for a political wrestling match. Mr. Gowda opposed the setting up of Cauvery Water Management Board. The people of the State would lose their say in the sharing of the river waters if the board was set up, he said. Earlier in the day, Mr. Gowda opened a *garadi mane* (wrestling arena) in Mysuru and promised wrestlers that he would try to secure them monthly stipend from the government if the JD(S) comes to power in the State.

Read more at:

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/gowda-dares-siddaramaiah-for-a-political-wrestling-bout/article23325940.ece>

Are Karnataka Assembly Elections 2018 Semi-Finals for 2019 Lok Sabha Polls?

- Business Standard

March 23, 2018

In 2014, PM Narendra Modi led NDA stormed into power with an absolute majority. Since then, BJP has been successful in keeping the momentum going. As of today BJP led governments are in power in 22 states either on their own or along with a coalition partner. The BJP led NDA government has come under pressure and severe criticism on many fronts recently. Farmer agitations, distress in the agricultural sector and failure to generate enough jobs are the primary concerns on which the government is perceived to be unsuccessful by many. The first amongst the remaining state assembly elections will be the Karnataka assembly elections 2018 that is due to be held in May 2018. Here the Congress and the BJP are in the throbbing rivalry and the BJP is trying to snatch power from the current Congress Government.

Read more at:

<https://www.oneindia.com/india/karnataka-elections-30-sitting-mlas-likely-to-lose-their-seats-says-internal-survey-2664218.html>

Karnataka Elections 2018: Will It Be in Favour of BJP?

- Business Standard

March 23, 2018

After Uttar Pradesh elections, Karnataka elections are certainly very important for both the national parties. It is important for the Congress to win in these coming elections as a loss will have a huge impact on the party. The BJP is focusing on 'Congress Mukth Bharath' (Congress-free India). It would be the most crucial challenge for the BJP to win in these elections as Karnataka is a gateway for them in the south. Caste system plays a very crucial role in politics and Karnataka is no exception to it. All the parties have their own caste equation in Karnataka and have strong backing by castes. According to a survey, Modi is said to be the most popular leader in Karnataka. He is popular in Hindi speaking states (80%) and Karnataka (79%) and in Gujarat about 68%. There is a correlation between BJP's support base and literacy.

Read more at:

http://www.business-standard.com/article/elections/karnataka-elections-2018-will-it-be-in-favor-of-bjp-118032300298_1.html

Karnataka Elections: '30 Sitting MLAs Likely To Lose Their Seats', Says Internal Survey

- Vicky Nanjappa

March 23, 2018

At least 30 MLAs in the Congress are unlikely to get tickets for the forthcoming Karnataka Assembly Elections. The Congress in Karnataka has conducted two surveys ahead of the polls and found that the chances of these 30 candidates winning are bleak.

The survey report is now being examined by the high command and a final call on whether to give them tickets or not would be taken. There is a chance that these sitting MLAs may not be given tickets and fresh faces would be roped in instead. The Congress would hold a meeting on March 28 and 29 to take a final call on the candidates. So far the screening committee headed by Madhusudhan Mistry has only analysed those constituencies in which the Congress lost in 2013.

Read more at:

<https://www.oneindia.com/india/karnataka-elections-30-sitting-mlas-likely-to-lose-their-seats-says-internal-survey-2664218.html>

BJP-JD(S) Alliance in the Offing for Karnataka Assembly Elections?

- The Times of India

March 24, 2018

H D Kumaraswamy, state president of the JD(S), dropped broad hints that his party could join hands with the BJP to oust the ruling Congress in the event of a hung assembly. The former Chief Minister's comments came after two Congress MLAs — including a senior minister — were allowed to vote for a second time after they committed technical errors in their first ballot papers during the Rajya Sabha elections at the Vidhana Soudha. Kumaraswamy reminded the Congress that he and his party cannot be considered non-entities in Karnataka politics. The JD(S) is being seen as a likely 'king maker' in the event of a hung assembly, and Kumaraswamy is walking a tight rope in keeping his options open of an alliance with either the Congress or BJP.

Read more at:

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/bjp-jds-alliance-in-the-offing-for-karnataka-assembly-elections/articleshow/63436055.cms>

Karnataka Elections 2018: Rahul Gandhi Asks JD(S) To Come Clean On Its Support to BJP

- Mumbai Mirror

March 25, 2018

Continuing his attack on the Janata Dal(S), Congress president Rahul Gandhi asked former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda's party to come clean on its support to the BJP. The Congress president, who is in the fourth round of campaigning in poll-bound Karnataka, is currently touring the old Mysuru region, where the Vokkaliga community has a significant presence. The JD(S) enjoys the support of the Vokkaligas. Terming employment generation the "biggest problem" in the country, Gandhi attacked the BJP-led central government for "not" fulfilling the promises it had made to the people such as job creation and addressing the issue of farmers' distress. Praising the Siddaramaiah government in the state, he said it had worked for the poor, downtrodden and backward communities.

Read more at:

<https://mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com/news/india/karnataka-elections-2018-rahul-gandhi-asks-jds-to-come-clean-on-its-support-to-bjp/articleshow/63453586.cms>

Karnataka Election 2018: Different Regions and Historical Voting Trends

- Business Standard

March 26, 2018

In Karnataka, the 2008 assembly elections was won by BJP comfortably with 110 seats, whereas the 2013 assembly elections was swept by the Congress by winning 122 seats. The alternating results and trends may suggest that any party is capable of performing well throughout the state on their given day. But still the different regions of the state have been considered as traditional strongholds of different political parties. Karnataka is divided into 30 districts and 4 administrative divisions and this geography of Karnataka is contained within 6 distinct regions. Different factors make these 6 regions conducive for one party but unfavourable to others. In the Bangalore region the BJP has historically done well. With their traditional vote bank and that of minorities, the Congress is also a major player and not just a pushover in this region.

Read more at:

http://www.business-standard.com/article/elections/karnataka-election-2018-different-regions-and-historical-voting-trends-118032600145_1.html

Karnataka Assembly Elections: Congress Will Better its 2013 Tally, Predicts Survey

- News 18

March 26, 2018

The Congress will not only return to power in Karnataka but will also end up improving its tally in the 224-member Legislative Assembly, a pre-poll survey conducted by C-Fore predicted. The survey was conducted between March 1 and 25 amongst 22,357 voters across 154 assembly constituencies. The respondents were spread across 2,368 polling booths covering 326 urban and 977 rural locations. C-Fore said it had a margin of error of 1 percentage point. Sources told News 18 that the Congress itself had commissioned this survey. In 2013, C-Fore had predicted that the Congress would end up winning 119-120 seats and it ended up with 122. The Congress won 122 seats in the 2013 polls and this year, the survey gave 126 seats to the ruling party of the state. The BJP, too, will improve its tally in the House but at the expense of the JD (S) and not that of the Congress. The JD (S) tally will drop from 40 to 27.

Read more at:

<https://www.news18.com/news/politics/karnataka-assembly-elections-congress-will-better-its-2013-tally-predicts-survey-1699977.html>

Karnataka Assembly Election Dates Out: It's Do or Die for Congress, Southern Test for BJP

- Hindustan Times

March 26, 2018

As the Karnataka assembly elections 2018 is set to be held on May 12, the political battle shifts from the east (three North-eastern states had polls in February) and north (by-polls were held in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in March) to the south. For the Congress, this is almost an existential battle. The party is reduced to power in only three states — Punjab, Mizoram and Karnataka. A loss will erode Rahul Gandhi's credibility as soon as he has taken over as the Congress president. It will devastate the cadre and leave them with a sense that 2019 is a lost cause. It will leave the party without power in the South (barring Puducherry) — which remains the final unconquered bastion for the BJP. Karnataka also matters for BJP because a win will reverse the slide, for the party is emerging from a string of by-poll losses in UP, Bihar, MP and Rajasthan. The growing conventional wisdom in Delhi's political circles is that 2019 is not 2014, that the Modi wave may have dissipated. A win in Karnataka will reinforce BJP's dominance and help counter the perception that it has already peaked.

Read more at:

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/karnataka-election-2018-dates-announced-do-or-die-for-congress-southern-test-for-bjp/story-bF1OkchtG2jMorLmkNs9RL.html>

Karnataka Elections: How the State Votes and Will the 10 Year Polling Pattern Change?

- Vicky Nanjappa

March 30, 2018

In the past decade, the voting pattern in the state has more or less remained the same. The BJP has always bagged a lion's share of the Lingayat votes while the Vokkaliga votes were divided between the Congress and JD(S). In the case of the upper caste votes, it has been in favour of the BJP while the lower social bloc votes have been bagged by the Congress. In 2008 the BJP had bagged 51 per cent of the Lingayat votes under the leadership of B S Yeddyurappa. The Congress got 25 per cent while the JD(S) bagged 15 per cent of this vote share in 2008. When it came to the Vokkaliga votes, the JD(S) bagged 40 per cent while the Congress and BJP got 25 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. For the Congress, the Muslims have been the biggest supporters. The party bagged 65 per cent of the Muslim votes in 2008. There are two very important factors in 2018. Firstly the BJP is a united unit and this the party would hope will help rope in the Lingayat votes. Dr. Sandeep Shastri, leading psephologist says that in 2013, the BJP and KJP together polled 70 per cent of the Lingayat vote

Read more at:

https://www.oneindia.com/india/karnataka-elections-how-the-state-votes-and-will-the-10-year-polling-pattern-change-2668413.html?utm_source=article&utm_medium=fb-button&utm_campaign=article-fbshare

Diary of Political Developments

KARNATAKA STATE ELECTIONS -2018



Siddaramaiah-led Karnataka Govt Gives Separate Religion Status To Lingayat Community

The state government has accepted the recommendation of a committee formed to study the issue. The ball is now in the Centre's court. Minister MB Patil confirmed that the separate religion tag has been sought for both Lingayats and Lingayat-Veerashaivas (Veerashaivas who follow Basavanna) as recommended by the expert committee.

Karnataka Assembly Elections To Be Held May 12th , Counting Set For May 15th

The Karnataka Assembly elections will be held on May 12th, and counting of votes will be held May 15th, the Election Commission (EC) announced on March 27th. The EC also said that April 24th will be the last date to file nominations and April 27th will be the last date for withdrawal of candidature.

Former Karnataka Police Officer Launched Bharatiya Janashakti Congress (BJC) Ahead Of State Elections

Former Karnataka Police officer Anupama Shenoy on March 18th, 2018 said her newly-launched Bharatiya Janashakti Congress (BJC) will contest 15 legislative assembly seats in the upcoming state polls. BJC's aim is to work towards communal harmony, peace, eliminate corruption and make a fearless society.

Congress President Rahul Gandhi To Campaign In Karnataka On March 20th And 21st

During his third leg of campaign Rahul Gandhi will cover Dakshin Kannada region in his two-day visit to the poll-bound Karnataka state. He would address many rallies and corner meetings in the coastal and Mysore region of the State.

Chief Editors: Dr. Priyanca Mathur Velath & Dr. Reetika Syal

Editorial Support: Ms. Anjali Sankar

Kindly e-mail your feedback to: cersseelectiontracker2018@gmail.com