

THE HINDU

'Socio-economic factors determine voting pattern of minorities'

NLSIU holds seminar on 'religious minorities and politics'

Special Correspondent

BANGALORE: The voting pattern of minority communities is determined by a variety of socio-economic factors and political context of specific elections rather than a tendency to vote en-bloc on the basis of religious identity alone, said Sandeep Shastri, political analyst and Pro Vice-Chancellor of Jain University.

He was speaking at a seminar on 'Religious Minorities and Politics: The Karnataka Perspective' here on Sunday, organised by the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, National Law School of India University.

Prof. Shastri pointed that as many as 21 of the Assembly constituencies (9 per cent) have more than 20 per cent Muslim voters, but few among them have elected a Muslim MLA in the last election. Bijapur city, which has 40 per cent Muslim voters, does not have a Muslim MLA.

He pointed out that in the Lok Sabha elections of 2009, an estimated 68 per cent of minorities voted for Congress as opposed to 55 per cent in 2004. Support for the Congress among Muslims is large in rural areas and support for the Bharatiya Janata Party among them is an urban, middle-class phenomenon, he added.

Speaking on the question of political representation of Muslims, Prof. Shastri said it had never been in keeping with the population size. At its best, following the 1978 elections, 6.1 per cent of the MLAs were Muslims, which is



ANALYSING A TREND: (From left) Valeria Rodrigues, political scientist, JNU; Abdul Aziz, visiting professor, CSSEIP, NLSIU; S. Japhet, director, CSSEIP; and Sandeep Shastri, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Jain University, at a seminar in Bangalore on Sunday. — PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

• 'Lingayats, Vokkaligas have had an average presence of 33 p.c. and 24.4 p.c. since 1962'

• 'Ministerial berths too have eluded Muslims'

still not proportionate to the population size.

The average presence of Muslims in the Assembly since 1952 has been 3.5 per cent and other minorities, 1.3 per cent, he said.

He counter-posed it with the dominant communities of Lingayats and Vokkaligas, who have had an average presence of 33 per cent and 24.4 per cent since 1962 to

now, adding up to 57.4 per cent.

Prof. Shastri said that ministerial berths too had eluded Muslims, especially those regarded as the top five portfolios. There has not been a single Minister in the last two Cabinets, he added, unprecedented in the history of Karnataka since the time of the late S. Nijalingappa.

Senior journalist Dinesh

Amin Mattu argued that political representation does not necessarily translate to political power. People from Dalit communities, who had managed to find political representation thanks to reservation, were not necessarily politically powerful, he added.

The former Minister and Congress leader B.K. Chandrashekar said Muslims today lacked a sense of security, with educated youth from the community being rounded up by the police on terror charges. He said there was a need to instil a sense of security in the community.