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ELECTIONS TO THE LOK SABHA FROM KARNATAKA (1952-1991): AN ANALYSIS OF THE VOTING PATTERN AND ELECTORAL TRENDS

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Introduction

The vigour and vitality of a democratic polity is often mirrored in the dynamics of its electoral process. Periodic elections conducted in a free and fair manner are reflective of the democratic values and traditions adopted and nurtured by the system. By providing for universal adult franchise and parliamentary democracy, the framers of our Constitution set the pace for the democratisation of Independent India's political structures and processes. The successful conduct of ten General Elections to the Lok Sabha has strengthened the democratic roots of the system and it has been repeatedly demonstrated that the Indian voters are capable of articulating their electoral preferences in an effective manner.¹

The present study attempts at analysing the Lok Sabha elections in the State of Karnataka—covering the ten General Elections held till 1991—from varied perspectives. The different issues examined include the steady increase in the electorate in the State, the voter turnout in successive elections, the phenomenon of invalid votes and the performance of political parties and independents. Wherever relevant, the study also seeks to compare the electoral trends in the State with those at the national level.

Lok Sabha Elections from Karnataka : An Overview

Presently, the State of Karnataka elects 28 members to the Lok Sabha. In the first General Elections held in 1952, there were 11 constituencies² in Karnataka (then referred to as Mysore) which was classified as a Part B State³. The reorganisation of States on a linguistic basis in November 1956 resulted in the redrawing of the boundaries of the State. As a result, the number of Lok Sabha constituencies in the State, during the second General Elections held in 1957, more than doubled, to 26.⁴ In the 1962 General Elections, the State continued to have 26 Lok Sabha constituencies.⁵ In the 1967 General Elections, the number of Lok Sabha constituencies in the State increased to 27.⁶ The number of Lok Sabha constituencies in the State remained unchanged in the 1971 General Elections. Following the Constitution (31st Amendment) Act, 1973⁷, raising the upper limit of seats in the Lok Sabha

to 545, the number of Lok Sabha constituencies in Karnataka rose to 28.⁸ This increase came into effect with the 1977 General Elections. Table 1 depicts the election-wise number of constituencies in the State.

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF LOK SABHA CONSTITUENCIES IN KARNATAKA*

Year in which elections were held	Number of Lok Sabha constituencies	Percentage of increase
1952	11	-
1957	26	136
1962	26	-
1967	27	4
1971	27	-
1977	28	4
1980	28	-
1984	28	-
1989	28	-
1991	28	-

A comparison of the pattern of increase in the number of Lok Sabha constituencies at the all-India level and in Karnataka is attempted in Table 2. The Table shows that after the reorganisation of States on the linguistic basis, the percentage of increase in the number of Lok Sabha constituencies both at the all-India level and Karnataka, has more or less remained the same.

TABLE 2
INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF LOK SABHA CONSTITUENCIES:
ALL-INDIA AND KARNATAKA

Year in which elections were held	ALL-INDIA			KARNATAKA		
	No. of seats (elected)	Increase	% of Increase	No. of seats	Increase	% of increase
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1952	489	-	-	11	-	-
1957	494	5	1	26	15	136
1962	494	-	-	26	-	-

* All election statistics used in this study are drawn from:

- Election Statistics of General Elections to the Lok Sabha from Karnataka for the period 1952-1991, published by the Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka.
- David Butler, et. al., *A Compendium of Indian Elections* (New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann), 1984.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1967	520	26	5	27	1	4
1971	518	-	-	27	-	-
1977	542	24	5	28	1	4
1980	542	-	-	28	-	-
1984	542	-	-	28	-	-
1989	543*	1	2	28	-	-
1991	543	-	-	28	-	-

*The increase in the number of Lok Sabha constituencies in the 1989 Elections was to provide for one more Lok Sabha constituency in Goa which had been made a State.

Electorate

The electorate in Karnataka has registered a steady increase over the years as is evident from Table 3. In the 1952 General Elections, 3.97 million were registered as voters in the State. The number of voters rose to 28.74 million in the 1991 General Elections - a near nine-fold increase. The most significant increase in the number of voters who could exercise their franchise (from one General Election to another) was in the 1957 General Elections - 152% increase - after the States' reorganisation.

The lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18, as a result of the 61st Amendment to the Constitution,⁹ saw a sharp increase in the number of registered voters in the State in the 1989 General Elections. As compared to the 1984 General Elections, the 1989 General Elections saw a 35% increase in the electorate in the State.

TABLE 3
TOTAL ELECTORATE FOR LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN
KARNATAKA: 1952-1991

Year in which elections were held	Electorate (in millions)	Percentage of increase
1952	3.97	-
1957	10.01	152
1962	11.35	13
1967	12.78	13
1971	13.79	8
1977	16.77	22
1980	19.56	17
1984	21.10	8
1989	28.47	35
1991	28.74	1

A comparison of the pattern of increase in the electorate in successive elections at the all-India level and in Karnataka shows a distinct similarity (see Table 4). The only possible exception is in the case of the 1957 General Elections, when the electorate in Karnataka (then Mysore) witnessed a phenomenal increase, due to the reorganisation of the State. Karnataka's contribution to the all-India electorate has more or less remained the same (around 5 % to 5.7 %) since the 1957 General Elections.

TABLE 4
TOTAL ELECTORATE : ALL INDIA AND KARNATAKA (1952-1991)

Year in which elections were held	ALL INDIA		KARNATAKA		% of Karnataka electorate to all-India
	Total electorate [in millions]	% of increase [in millions]	Total electorate [in millions]	% of increase	
1952	173.21	-	3.97	-	2.29
1957	193.65	12	10.01	152	5.16
1962	217.68	12	11.35	13	5.21
1967	250.60	15	12.78	13	5.09
1971	274.09	9	13.79	8	5.03
1977	321.17	17	16.77	22	5.22
1980	363.94	13	19.56	17	5.37
1984	400.10	10	21.10	8	5.27
1989	498.65	25	28.47	35	5.71
1991	514.13	3	28.74	1	5.59

The average electorate per Lok Sabha constituency, in Karnataka, has undergone a three fold increase during the period 1952 to 1991 (see Table 5). In the 1952 General Elections, the average number of voters in each constituency was 0.36 million. In the 1991 General Elections, it rose to 1.03 million.

TABLE 5
AVERAGE ELECTORATE PER LOK SABHA CONSTITUENCY IN
KARNATAKA: 1952-1991

Year of election	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991
Voters (in millions)	0.36	0.39	0.44	0.47	0.51	0.60	0.70	0.75	1.02	1.03

Following the 31st Amendment to the Constitution,¹⁰ there has been a sharp increase in the number of voters in each constituency. Further, sharp variations in the electorate in constituencies has been witnessed

since the 1977 General Elections.¹¹ In the 1977 General Elections, the constituency with the highest number of voters in the State was Bangalore South - 0.66 million - and the constituency with the lowest electorate was Udupi - 0.53 million. In 1977, there appeared to be no major variation in the number of voters among constituencies. However, the variation in the number of voters in constituencies was clearly apparent in the 1991 General Elections. In this election, the constituency with the largest electorate - Kanakapura - had 1.37 million voters whereas the constituency with the smallest electorate - Udupi - had 0.91 million voters.

There appears to be similarity in the pattern of the average electorate per Lok Sabha constituency in Karnataka and at the all-India level (see Table 6).

TABLE 6
AVERAGE ELECTORATE PER LOK SABHA CONSTITUENCY :
ALL- INDIA AND KARNATAKA - 1952 TO 1991

Year of election	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991
VOTERS										
ALL-INDIA [millions]	0.35	0.39	0.44	0.48	0.53	0.59	0.67	0.74	0.92	0.96
KARNATAKA [millions]	0.36	0.39	0.44	0.47	0.51	0.60	0.70	0.75	1.02	1.03

Voter Turnout

The vitality and dynamism of a democratic polity is demonstrated by the nature of voter turnout in the elections. A large voter turnout is many a time symbolic of a vibrant democratic polity. When the members of the Constituent Assembly took the momentous decision to guarantee the right to vote to every adult Indian citizen, many expressed the apprehension as to whether the Indian voters would exercise their franchise in an effective and judicious manner.

Four decades of electoral experience has belied the doubts expressed about the wisdom and capacity of the Indian voter. While voter turnout in successive general elections has not reached the levels ideal for a democratic polity, the percentage of voter turnout has, over the years, been registering a steady increase.

Karnataka has witnessed generally a rise in the voter turnout in successive General Elections (see Table 7). In the four General Elections of 1967, 1977, 1984 and 1989, more than 60% of the voters cast their vote. These four elections aroused a great deal of public interest and increased voter participation as a result of the nature of the political

scenario at the time of the conduct of these elections and the issues that were debated in the course of the election campaigns. The 1967 General Elections were the first Lok Sabha elections in the post Nehruvian phase of Indian politics and witnessed a concerted effort on the part of the major non-Congress parties to field a common candidate against the ruling Congress party.¹² The 1977 General Elections assumed significance as it was fought in the backdrop of the Emergency and saw the unity of non-Congress forces. The 1984 Elections were held soon after the assassination of Smt. Indira Gandhi. The 1989 Elections saw a divided Opposition in Karnataka. The electorate had, earlier in 1983 and 1985, voted the Janata Party to power at the State level. The split in the Party and its failure to ensure stability at the State level had disillusioned the voter.¹³ Further, in 1989, simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assembly were held. The sharp fall in the voter turnout in the 1991 Elections could be attributed to the premature dissolution of the Ninth Lok Sabha and the voters having to once again exercise their franchise to constitute a new Lok Sabha in less than 20 months.

TABLE 7
PERCENTAGE OF VOTER TURNOUT IN THE LOK SABHA
ELECTIONS IN KARNATAKA : 1952-1991

Year of election	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991
Voter turnout	51.9	52.8	59.3	63.0	57.4	63.2	57.7	65.7	64.7	54.8

A comparison of the voter turnout at the all-India level and in Karnataka in successive Lok Sabha elections shows that the voter turnout in the State has always been much higher than the national average (see Table 8).

TABLE 8
PERCENTAGE OF VOTER TURNOUT IN THE LOK SABHA
ELECTIONS : ALL INDIA AND KARNATAKA—1952-1991

Year of Election	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991
All India	45.7	47.7	55.4	61.3	55.3	60.5	57.0	64.1	62.0	51.1
Karnataka	51.9	52.8	59.3	63.0	57.4	63.2	57.7	65.7	64.7	54.8

An analysis of the constituencies in the State that have registered the highest and lowest voter turnout in each General Election reveals a clear trend with regard to the constituencies registering the lowest voter turnout (see Table 9).

TABLE 9

**CONSTITUENCIES REGISTERING THE HIGHEST AND
LOWEST TURNOUT IN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN
KARNATAKA : 1952-1991**

Year in which elections were held	VOTER TURNOUT [% in brackets]	
	Highest	Lowest
1952	Shimoga [75.1]	Bangalore South [45.1]
1957	Belgaum [63.6]	Gulbarga [36.96]
1962	Kanakapura [68.3]	Raichur [42.9]
1967	Mangalore [70.7]	Raichur [47.7]
1971	Mandya [71.4]	Raichur [43.9]
1977	Shimoga [73.1]	Raichur [50.6]
1980	Mangalore [71.2]	Bidar [40.0]
1984	Mandya [77.1]	Bidar [45.0]
1989	Mandya [76.0]	Raichur [54]
1991	Chikkaballapur [67.5]	Raichur [39.4]

Raichur, Bidar and Gulbarga constituencies which cover geographical areas that are considered backward from the angle of per capita income¹⁴ and literacy rate,¹⁵ have been among the constituencies that have registered the lowest voter turnout in successive General Elections. No clear pattern is evident in the case of constituencies that have registered the highest voter turnout in successive elections. Further, it is not possible to categorically assert that urban areas have a higher voter turnout and rural areas have a lower voter turnout as Bangalore (South) constituency which has an exclusively urban electorate has, in the last four General Elections (since 1980), been among the four constituencies in the State with the lowest voter turnout.¹⁶

Over the last ten General Elections, the turnout in the State has crossed 60 per cent on only four occasions. There is a need for a

concerted effort to encourage a greater number of voters to cast their vote. A greater voter turnout would go a long way in strengthening the democratic process in India.

The voters, today, need to be suitably motivated to exercise their right to franchise without necessarily providing for any legal compulsions in this regard. Political parties need to address this question with all seriousness and need to enthuse the apathetic voter.

Invalid Votes

In Karnataka, the percentage of invalid votes has over successive General Elections been gradually decreasing (see Table 10). The 1989 General Elections proved to be an exception, as the percentage of invalid votes registered a steep increase in this election. In spite of the decrease in the percentage of invalid votes, its percentage continues to be significant and alarming. Invalidity of votes has been caused by a wide range of factors and forces: (a) ignorance amongst the voters on the procedure to be adopted while casting the votes; (b) ever increasing number of contestants entering the electoral fray; (c) frequent changes in the election symbols of major political parties, resulting in confusion in the minds of the voters; (d) simultaneous conduct of Lok Sabha and Assembly elections; and (e) voters deliberately casting an invalid vote as a symbol of protest against candidates in the electoral fray, political parties, electoral system and working of the polity.

**TABLE 10
PERCENTAGE OF INVALID VOTES (AS COMPARED TO TOTAL
VOTES POLLED) IN THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN
KARNATAKA : 1952-1991**

Year in which election held	1952	57	62	67	71	77	80	84	89	91
% Of Invalid votes	NA	3.9	4.7	4.8	3.4	3.1	3.1	2.5	4.6	2.5
Increase/ Decrease			+8	+1	-1.4	-3	0	-6	+2.1	-2.1

In Karnataka, a very clear pattern emerges with regard to the constituencies that have registered the highest and lowest percentage of invalid votes in successive General Elections (see Table 11). The constituencies that registered the highest percentage of invalid votes were invariably in the economically and educationally backward regions¹⁷. The constituencies that registered the lowest percentage of invalid votes were all in urban and educationally forward regions.¹⁸

TABLE 11

**CONSTITUENCIES REGISTERING THE HIGHEST AND LOWEST
PERCENTAGE OF INVALID VOTES IN THE LOK SABHA
ELECTIONS IN KARNATAKA : 1952-1991**

Year in which elections were held	Highest percentage of invalid votes	Lowest percentage of invalid votes
1952	NA	NA
1957	NA	NA
1962	Raichur [6.18]	Bangalore City [2.54]
1967	Chamrajanagar [6.04]	Bangalore [3.15]
1971	Raichur [6.16]	Bangalore [1.35]
1977	Raichur [5.16]	Bangalore South [1.90]
1980	Raichur [4.46]	Udupi [1.70]
1984	Koppal [4.79]	Bangalore South [1.32]
1989	Mysore [5.77]	Udupi [3.07]
1991	Koppal [3.90]	Udupi [1.32]

NA : Not available

A comparison of the percentage of invalid votes in the Lok Sabha elections at the all-India level and Karnataka reveals no clear trend. In the 1989 elections, the percentage of invalid votes was significantly higher in Karnataka as compared to the national level (see Table 12). This was possibly due to the simultaneous conduct of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly elections in Karnataka.

TABLE 12

**PERCENTAGE OF INVALID VOTES IN LOK SABHA
ELECTIONS—1952-1991 : ALL INDIA AND KARNATAKA**

Percentage of invalid votes	Year in which elections were held									
	1952	57	62	67	71	77	80	84	89	91
ALL INDIA	NA	4.48	3.94	4.68	3.25	2.75	2.43	2.61	2.68	2.66
KARNATAKA	NA	3.90	4.66	4.76	3.41	3.08	3.08	2.52	4.64	2.52

A high percentage of invalid votes distorts the verdict of the electorate. The use of electronic voting machines could eliminate the problems posed by invalid votes. In the 1983 Assembly elections in Karnataka, the use of electronic voting machines in an Assembly constituency (Shantinagara) resulted in no invalid vote being cast in that constituency, except for a few invalid postal ballots.

Parties and Candidates

Over the years, the Lok Sabha elections have witnessed an increasing number of individuals entering the electoral fray as candidates. Karnataka is no exception in this regard. While in the 1952 General Elections there were just 37 contestants in the 11 constituencies in the State, the 1991 General Elections saw 363 candidates entering the electoral fray in the 27 constituencies (in one constituency the election was countermanded) in the State. While the number of constituencies in the State had just over doubled, there was a near ten fold increase in the number of contestants. Viewed from the angle of average number of contestants per constituency, Karnataka has witnessed an increase from an average of 3 contestants per constituency in 1952 to 13 contestants per constituency in 1991 (see Table 13).

TABLE 13

**TOTAL NUMBER OF CONTESTANTS IN THE LOK SABHA
ELECTIONS FROM KARNATAKA : 1952-1991**

Year in which elections were held	Total number of contestants	Average contestants per constituency
1952	37	3
1957	62	2
1962	88	3
1967	100	4
1971	104	4
1977	98	4
1980	190	7
1984	334	12
1989	242	9
1991	363	13

It is significant to note that the average number of contestants per constituency has been lower in Karnataka as compared to the national average, save in the 1984 elections (see Table 14).

TABLE 14

**AVERAGE NUMBER OF CONTESTANTS PER CONSTITUENCY IN
THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS : 1952-1991 ALL INDIA AND
KARNATAKA**

Year in which elections were held	Average number of contestants per constituency	
	ALL INDIA	KARNATAKA
1952	4	3
1957	3	2
1962	4	3
1967	5	4
1971	5	4
1977	5	4
1980	9	7
1984	10	12
1989	11	9
1991	16	13

The candidates contesting the Lok Sabha elections can be categorised under two heads: party-sponsored candidates and independents. In Karnataka, there has been an increase in both party-sponsored and independent candidates, in successive elections. Till the 1984 General Elections, the party-sponsored candidates outnumbered the independents (see Table 15). However, the trend has been reversed with the 1984 General Elections.

TABLE 15

**PARTY-SPONSORED AND INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES
CONTESTING THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN KARNATAKA :
1952-1991**

	Year in which elections were held									
	1952	57	62	67	71	77	80	84	89	91
Party-Sponsored	29	45	62	55	60	61	98	67	115	120
Independents	8	17	26	45	44	37	92	267	127	243
Total	37	62	88	100	104	98	190	334	242	363

At the national level too, both party-sponsored contestants and independents have registered a steady increase. Independent candidates

have outnumbered party-sponsored candidates since the 1977 General Elections (see Table 16).

TABLE 16

**PARTY-SPONSORED AND INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES
CONTESTING THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS : 1952-1991**

	Year in which elections were held									
	1952	57	62	67	71	77	80	84	89	91
Party Sponsored Candidates	1341	1038	1505	1505	1650	1215	1803	1615	2448	3066
Independents	533	481	480	864	1134	1224	2826	3878	3712	5230
TOTAL	1874	1519	1985	2369	2784	2439	4629	5493	6160	8296

In Karnataka, urban constituencies have tended to attract a larger number of contestants. Since the 1971 General Elections, the constituency with the largest number of contestants in the State has been Bangalore (South) constituency, whose electorate reside in Bangalore city.

The mushroom growth of political parties and the frequent splits that have been periodically seen in the major political parties have resulted in an increase in the party-sponsored candidates. Traditionally, the contest in Karnataka has been between the Congress party nominees on the one hand and the nominees of the non-Congress parties on the other.

The steep rise in the number of independents contesting the elections can be attributed to several factors. Individuals not aligned to any political party, but nursing political ambitions, enter the electoral fray as independents. Candidates are also known to enter the electoral fray as independents on being denied the party ticket and are more commonly referred to as rebels.

On occasions, independent candidates are sponsored by political parties to either offset the chances and influence of a rival candidate or to split the vote on caste/religious considerations or even as a device to increase the number of election agents in polling booths and during the counting of votes. Independents are also known to have used elections for political bargaining and greater publicity. Political observers have pointed out that independents are often attracted by the prospects of publicity and those with unaccounted money do not mind providing an outlet for the use of these funds.

A direct fall-out of the entry of a large number of contestants in the election fray has been the multi-cornered contests seen in nearly all the constituencies. The increase in the number of contestants has also put pressure on the Election Commission which is today required to identify a greater number of election symbols and print larger ballot papers. The electoral process also comes under strain. The voter, too, faces the added complication of having to choose from several candidates.

Votes Polled and Seats Won by Political Parties and Independents

A trend that is clearly evident in the Lok Sabha election results in Karnataka is that, over the years the electorate has tended to favour candidates sponsored by the Congress party.¹⁹ Congress candidates have registered victories in more than 80% of the constituencies in all the General Elections, save in 1967. However, when viewed from the angle of valid votes polled, the party has in no election secured more than 71% of the valid votes polled (see Table 17). In every General Election, it is noticed that the percentage of seats won by the Congress party in the State is substantially higher than the percentage of votes polled by the party candidates.

TABLE 17

PERCENTAGE OF SEATS WON AND VOTES POLLED BY THE CONGRESS PARTY IN THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN KARNATAKA: 1952-1991

	Year in which elections were held									
	1952	57	62	67	71	77	80	84	89	91
Seats won	10	23	25	18	27	26	27	24	27	22
% of seats won to total seats	91	88	96	66	100	93	96	86	96	81
% of votes polled	53	56	53	49	71	57	56	52	49	42

This discrepancy between the votes polled and seats won, especially in the case of the party which wins a majority of the seats, is not unique to Karnataka but is a feature of the electoral trend at the national level too. At the national level, the Congress party has secured a disproportionately higher percentage of seats as compared to the votes it has polled (see Table 18). The only exceptions were in 1977 and 1989 when the percentage of votes polled by the Congress was higher than the percentage of seats won. Incidentally, the party did not form the Government after these elections. The parties which came to power after

the 1977 and 1989 Elections (Janata Party and the National Front, respectively) won a much higher percentage of seats as compared to votes polled in these elections.²⁰

TABLE 18

PERCENTAGE OF SEATS WON AND VOTES POLLED BY THE CONGRESS PARTY IN THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS : 1952-1991

	Year in which elections were held									
	1952	57	62	67	71	77	80	84	89	91
Seats won	364	371	361	283	352	154	353	415	197	225
% of total seats won	74	75	73	54	68	28	67	77	37	44
% of votes polled	45	48	45	41	44	35	43	48	40	38

While the Congress party has secured a disproportionately large percentage of seats when compared to the percentage of votes it has polled, the non-Congress parties and independents have invariably secured a higher percentage of votes as compared to the percentage of seats won (see Table 19).

TABLE 19

PERCENTAGE OF SEATS WON AND VOTES POLLED BY THE NON-CONGRESS PARTIES AND INDEPENDENTS IN THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN KARNATAKA : 1952-1991

Party*	Year in which election was held									
	1952	57	62	67	71	77	80	84	89	91
% of votes polled										29
BJP										
% of seats won*										15 [4]
% of votes polled						40	23	35	29	
JD/										
JP % of seats [between] won* 1978-89						7	4	14	4	
							[2]	[1]	[4]	[1]

Party	Year in which election was held									
	1952	57	62	67	71	77	80	84	89	91
% of votes polled										4
JP [only 1991]										
% of seats won*										4 [1]
% of votes polled	23									
KMPP										
% of seats won*	9 [1]									
% of votes polled		19		5						
PSP										
% of seats won*		4 [1]		7 [2]						
% of votes polled		2								
ASCF										
% of seats won*		4 [1]								
% of votes polled			3							
LSS										
% of seats won*			4 [1]							
% of votes polled				14						
SWA										
% of seats won*				19 [5]						
% of votes polled				3						
SSP										
% of seats won*				4 [1]						

Party	Year in which election was held									
	1952	57	62	67	71	77	80	84	89	91
% of votes polled		20		22						
IND										
% of seats won*		4 [1]		4 [1]						

*Only those political parties and independents, that registered an electoral victory in an election have been taken into consideration.

*In brackets, the number of seats won are given.

BJP: Bharatiya Janata party; JD: Janata Dal; JP: Janata Party; ASCF: All India Scheduled Castes Federation; LSS: Lok Seva Sangha; SWA: Swatantra Party; SSP: Samyukta Socialist Party; IND: Independents.

In the above Table, there are five instances of political parties securing a higher percentage of seats as compared to the percentage of votes. In the 1957 General Elections, an All India Scheduled Castes Federation candidate was elected, the party thus securing 4% of the seats (1 out of 26). However, the party polled only 2 % of the votes in the State. The possible explanation for this situation is that the party fielded a candidate in only one constituency in the State and he emerged victorious. In the 1962 General Elections, the nominees of the Lok Sevak Sangha (LSS) emerged victorious in one of the 26 constituencies in the State, thus securing 4% of the seats in the State. However, the party secured only 3.3% of the votes polled in the State. Here too, it must be noted that the LSS candidates contested in only three of the 26 constituencies in the State. In the 1967 General Elections, the Swatantra Party candidates emerged victorious in five of the 27 constituencies (19%) in the State but secured only 14% of the votes polled. The Party had fielded nominees in only 11 of the 27 constituencies. In the same election (1967) the PSP nominees were elected from two of the 27 constituencies (7%) in the State but the party secured only 5% of the votes polled. In this case too, the party had fielded candidates in only 5 of the 27 constituencies. In the same elections (1967) the SSP candidates emerged victorious in one constituency (4%) but the party secured only 2.6% of the valid votes polled in the State. Here too, the party had fielded candidates in only two of the 27 constituencies.

Thus, the percentage of seats won by a political party rarely reflects the percentage of votes polled by it. This discrepancy becomes even more glaring in the case of the party which secures the majority of the seats—either at the National or State level. The present electoral system—the first-past-the-post system—is largely responsible for this

electoral anomaly. Necessary steps need to be taken to remedy the situation and help mirror more effectively the mandate of the voters.

Women Candidates in the Election

The participation of women in the electoral process as candidates has been attracting attention and importance in recent times. It would be worthwhile to assess the trend with regard to women filing their nominations as candidates in the successive General Elections to the Lok Sabha from Karnataka.

In the first two General Elections—1952 and 1957—there was no woman candidate in the fray in Karnataka (Mysore) (see Table 20). In 1962, 1967 and 1971 only one woman candidate was sponsored by the Congress party, who emerged victorious in each of the elections. In the 1977 General Elections, there were four women candidates - 2 party-sponsored and 2 independents - of whom only one was elected. In the 1980 General Elections, only one lady contested the election and was defeated. In 1984, there were seven women contestants, of whom two emerged victorious. In 1989, the number of women contestants rose to 11, 4 party-sponsored and 7 independents, of whom, one was elected. In 1991, there were 13 women candidates and three emerged victorious.

TABLE 20
WOMEN CONTESTANTS IN THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN KARNATAKA : 1952-1991

Year in which elections were held	Women contested	Total contestants	% of women contested to total contestants	Women elected	% of women elected to total number elected
1	2	3	4	5	6
1952	-	37	-	-	-
1957	-	62	-	-	-
1962	1	88	1	1	4
1967	1	100	1	1	4
1971	1	104	1	1	4
1977	4	98	4	1	4
1980	1	190	0.5	-	-
1984	7	334	2	2	7
1989	11	242	5	1	4
1991	13	363	4	3	11

From the above Table it appears as if no party has made serious efforts to ensure adequate representation to women while deciding their nominees to contest the elections. Representation to women appears to be more symbolic, even in cases where it has been given. Women

have never constituted more than 5% of the total number of contestants in any election. Save in the 1991 General Elections - when women constituted 11% of those elected from the State - women have constituted a very negligible—0 to 7%—segment among those elected from the State.

At the national level too, political parties appear not to have given due consideration to fielding women candidates in the elections (see Table 21). Not more than 3% of the total contestants in every General Election have been women. Further, in a newly constituted Lok Sabha women have never constituted more than 7% of the members.

TABLE 21

WOMEN CONTESTANTS IN THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS : 1952-1989

Year in which election held	Women contested	Total contestants	% of women contested to total contestants	Women elected*	% of women elected to total number elected*
1952	43	1874	2	14	3
1957	45	1519	3	27	5
1962	65	1985	3	33	7
1967	66	2369	3	28	5
1971	86	2784	3	21	4
1977	70	2439	3	19	4
1980	142	4629	3	28	5
1984	134	5493	2	38	7
1989	198	8296	2	27	5

* in a newly constituted House.

Political parties need to seriously consider ways and means of ensuring adequate representation to women in the legislative bodies.

Reserved Constituencies

Article 330 of the Indian Constitution provides for reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, in proportion to their population. In the 1952 General Elections, Karnataka (Mysore) had two double member constituencies—Kolar and Mysore. In these constituencies each voter had two votes. As a rule the candidate who secured the highest number of votes was declared elected. Further, if the victorious candidates did not belong to a Scheduled Caste, the Scheduled Caste candidate who secured the highest number of votes was also declared elected. If the candidate who secured the highest number of votes belonged to a Scheduled Caste, the candidate securing the second highest number of votes was also declared elected. In the 1957 General Elections there were

three such double member Lok Sabha constituencies in the State Kolar, Mysore and Gulbarga.

In 1961, double member constituencies were abolished and the Delimitation Commission identified constituencies to be reserved for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. As a result, in the 1962 General Elections, three constituencies in the State were reserved for Scheduled Castes—Bidar, Kolar and Chamrajanagar. Only those belonging to the Scheduled Castes could contest the elections from these constituencies. In 1967, the number of reserved seats in the State was increased to four—Bidar, Kolar, Chamrajanagar and Chikkodi—and has remained unaltered since then. No Lok Sabha constituency in the State has been reserved for Scheduled Tribes.

Interestingly, save on two²¹ occasions, the Congress nominees have been elected from the Reserved constituencies in the State, in all the General Elections held till 1991.

Bye-Elections

Section 149 of the Representation of People Act 1951, states that in the event of a seat of a member elected to the Lok Sabha is declared vacant (either due to death, resignation or disqualification or under the provisions of the anti-defection law or by the House itself) or the election of the member occupying the seat is set aside, the Election Commission shall take necessary action to hold bye-election to fill the vacancy so caused.

During the period 1952-1991, bye-elections to the Lok Sabha from Karnataka have been held on 13 occasions. On seven of these occasions, the bye-election became necessary because of the death of the sitting member and on the other six occasions, the resignation of the sitting member caused the bye-election. A significant trend noticed is that in all the bye-elections, the party that had won the seat in the earlier General Election, retained the seat (see Table 22).

TABLE 22
BYE-ELECTIONS TO THE LOK SABHA FROM KARNATAKA :
1952-1991

Year in which bye-election held	Constituency	Reason for bye-election	Person elected in bye-election	Party
1962	Tumkur	Resignation of M.V.Krishnappa [Congress]	A.P. Jain	Cong

Year in which bye-election held	Constituency	Reason for bye-election	Person elected in bye-election	Party
1963	Belgaum	Death of B.N. Datar [Congress]	K.H.Veerab-hadrappa	Cong
1965	Bangalore	Death of H.C. Dasappa [Congress]	H.K.V.Gowda	Cong
1965	Chikballapur	Resignation of K.C.Reddy [Cong]	H.C.L.Reddy	Cong
1965	Tumkur	Resignation of A.P.Jain [Cong]	Mali Mariappa	Cong
1968	Mysore	Death of M.K. Shivananjappa [PSP]	S.M.Krishna	PSP
1968	Bijapur	Death of G.D. Patil [Congress]	B.K. Guddadini	Cong
1968	Madhugiri	Death of Mali Mariappa [Cong]	S.V.Reddy	Cong
1972	Mandya	Resignation of S.M.Krishna [Cong]	K.Chikkalingaiah	Cong
1974	Gulbarga	Death of D.S. Afzalpurkar [Congress]	S.R.Reddy	Cong
1978	Chikamagalur	Resignation of D.B.Chandre Gowda [Congress]	Indira Gandhi	Cong
1980	Gulbarga	Resignation of Dharam Singh [Congress]	C.M.Stephen	Cong
1986	Raichur	Death of B.V. Desai [Congress]	M.Y.Ghorpade	Cong

Conclusion

An analysis of the Lok Sabha election results from Karnataka clearly demonstrates that the voters in the State have in most cases expressed their electoral preference for the candidates who contested on the Congress party ticket. Irrespective of the trend at the national level, the preference of the electorate in the State has decidedly been in favour of the Congress party candidates. Over the ten General Elections to Lok Sabha from the State, Congress party candidates have won nearly 90% of the seats. Even on the four occasions when the Congress party fared badly at the national level—1967, 1977, 1989 and 1991—the relative

performance of the party at the State level was appreciably better. In the 1967 General Elections, though the Congress party won only 54% of seats at the national level, it won 66% of the seats at the State level. In the 1977 General Elections, the Congress party secured 28% of seats at the National level but 93% of the seats at the State level. In 1989, the party secured merely 37% of the seats at the national level but secured 96% of the seats at the State level. In 1991, the party secured 44% of seats at the national level and 81% of seats at the State level. With respect to the Lok Sabha elections, Karnataka has often been referred to as a safe bastion for the Congress party.

Even when the electorate in the State gave a clear mandate to a non-Congress party to form the Government in the State, it continued to endorse the candidature of the Congress candidates in the Lok Sabha elections. In the December 1984 Lok Sabha elections, the voters in the State elected 24 Congress candidates and 4 Janata Party candidates. Within four months, in the March 1985 Karnataka Assembly elections, the same voters gave a clear mandate to the Janata Party to form the Government in the State.

The electorate in the State has witnessed a phenomenal increase over the years. Further, the number of Lok Sabha constituencies and their territorial delimitation have remained unchanged ever since the 1977 elections. As a result, there are today vast disparities in the size of the electorate in various constituencies.

Political parties need to immediately take cognizance of the fact that voter turnout in successive General Elections shows an element of apathy in a segment of the voters. Effective steps need to be taken to motivate the apathetic voter and in the process strengthen the democratic foundations of the system.

The introduction of electronic voting machines would go a long way in drastically reducing the percentage of invalid votes and may also help in curbing electoral malpractices specifically related to voting.

In spite of their commitment, as reflected in their election manifestoes, no party has given adequate representation to women while distributing the party ticket. Representation to women today appears to be symbolic and even though political leaders have, on various occasions, expressed themselves in favour of providing for sufficient representation to women, this assurance has not been translated into reality.

Successive General Elections have seen a sharp increase in the number of contestants entering the electoral fray. Several suggestions have been made to counter the phenomenon of multi-cornered contests. The suggestions have invariably dealt with strategies to discourage independents from contesting the elections. The first-past-the-post system

has also contributed to the glaring anomaly in the seats won and votes polled by the political parties and independents. There is, today, a pressing need for a serious debate in the country to seek an alternative to the first-past-the-post system.

Any effort at electoral reforms should have as its aim, a better and more effective reflection of the voters' mandate. The analysis of the Lok Sabha elections from Karnataka shows that after ten General Elections, spread over four decades, certain lacunae in the existing system are clearly identifiable. Political parties need to muster the necessary political will to initiate suitable changes in the electoral system to mirror more effectively, the aims and aspirations of the Indian voter.

References

- ¹ See Iqbal Narain, P.C. Mathur, "Mass Political Culture in India", in Iqbal Narain ed. *Development, Politics and Social Theory* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1989); Iqbal Narain, et. al, *Elections Studies in India* (New Delhi: Allied, 1978) Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India* (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1970).
- ² Prior to the States' Reorganisation (undertaken in 1956), the territories of the Union were divided into three categories: Part A States comprising the former provinces of British India, Part B States comprising the formerly Princely States and Part C States which included the centrally administered areas.
- ³ Kolar (double member), Mysore (double member), Tumkur, Bangalore North, Bangalore South, Mandya, Hassan-Chikmagalur, Shimoga and Chitradurga.
- ⁴ Chikkodi, Belgaum, Kanara, Dharwar South, Dharwar North, Bijapur North, Bijapur South, Gulbarga (double member), Raichur, Koppal, Bellary, Chitradurga, Shimoga, Hassan, Mandya, Tiptur, Tumkur, Kolar (double member), Bangalore City, Bangalore, Mysore (double member), Mangalore and Udupi.
- ⁵ In the 1957 General Elections, three constituencies in the State were double member constituencies: Gulbarga, Kolar and Mysore. In the 1962 General Elections, each of these double member constituencies were made into two constituencies: Gulbarga into Gulbarga and Bidar; Kolar into Kolar and Chikballapur; and Mysore into Mysore and Chamrajanagar.
- ⁶ Bidar, Gulbarga, Raichur, Koppal, Bellary, Chitradurga, Tumkur, Madhugiri, Kolar, Hoskote, Bangalore, Kanakapura, Mandya, Chamrajanagar, Mysore, Mangalore, Udupi, Hassan, Chikmagalur, Shimoga, Kanara, Dharwar South, Dharwar North, Belgaum, Chikkodi, Bagalkot and Bijapur.
- ⁷ As a result of the 31st Constitutional Amendment Act, 1973 Article 81 was so amended so as to increase the upper limit of representation of States in the Lok Sabha from 500 to 525 and to decrease the limit for the Union territories from 25 to 20.
- ⁸ Bidar, Gulbarga, Raichur, Koppal, Bellary, Davangere, Chitradurga, Tumkur, Chikaballapur, Kolar, Kanakapura, Bangalore North, Bangalore South, Mandya, Chamrajanagar, Mysore, Mangalore, Udupi, Hassan, Chikmagalur, Shimoga, Kanara, Dharwar South, Dharwar North, Belgaum, Chikkodi, Bagalkot and Bijapur.

⁹ The Constitution (Sixty-First) Amendment Act lowered the voting age from 21 years to 18 years.

¹⁰ Article 81, n. 7.

¹¹ The number of constituencies and their territorial delimitation has remained unchanged since the 1977 General Elections.

¹² The Praja Socialist Party (PSP), Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), Swatantra Party and Communist Party of India (Marxist) reached an accord on seat adjustment and fielded common candidates against the Congress.

¹³ Sandeep Shastri, M.J. Vinod, "The Dynamics of Electoral Politics: A Case Study of the Karnataka Assembly Elections, 1989", *Indian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1991), p. 405.

¹⁴ Of the 20 districts in Karnataka, Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur districts rank amongst the lowest 8 (Bidar 4th lowest, Raichur 6th lowest and Gulbarga 8th lowest) in per capita income (1987-88) at current prices. (Source: "Karnataka at a Glance" [Bangalore: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Karnataka, 1990], p. 6.)

¹⁵ The literacy rate in the three districts of Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur (as per 1987-88 records) is the lowest in the State: Gulbarga and Raichur 25% and Bidar 26% literacy. (Source: "Karnataka at a Glance", No. 18, p. 55.)

¹⁶ 1980 General Elections: Bangalore South 4th lowest (51.2%), Gulbarga (46.1%), Raichur (40.9%), Bidar (40.0%).

1984 General Elections: Bangalore South 4th lowest (57.1%), Raichur (55.8%), Gulbarga (54.1%), Bidar (45.0%).

1989 General Elections: Bangalore South 2nd lowest (57%), Raichur (54%).

1991 General Elections: Bangalore South 3rd lowest (45.70%), Gulbarga (40.93%), Raichur (39.37%).

¹⁷ The electoral segments of Raichur constituency are all in Raichur District and a majority of the electoral segments that form part of Koppal constituency are in Raichur District. Raichur District has the lowest literacy rate (as per 1987-88 records, n.19,) and ranks amongst the lowest 6 districts in per capita income (n.18). In the 1989 Elections, Mysore constituency may have registered an exceptionally high percentage of invalid votes, due to the confusion that surrounded the candidature of the then leading Opposition party, the Janata Dal.

¹⁸ Bangalore (city) District and Dakshina Kannada Districts are placed first and second, respectively, among the districts of Karnataka in literacy rate as per 1987-88 records (n.19). The two Districts also rank among the top four Districts with respect to per capita income at current prices (1987-88) (n.18).

¹⁹ While referring to the Congress party, the reference is to the Indian National Congress prior to 1969, the Indian National Congress(R) after 1969 and the Indian National Congress (I) after 1978.

²⁰ In the 1977 General Elections the Janata Party won 295 seats - 54% of the total seats but polled only 41% of the votes. In the 1989 General Elections the National Front won 144 of the 522 seats for which elections were held (Janata Dal-141, Telugu Desam-2 and Congress(S)-1), thus securing 28% of the seats. The Front polled only 24% of the votes.

²¹ In the 1984 General Elections, a candidate belonging to the Janata Party was declared elected from Kolar. In the 1991 General Elections the candidate sponsored by the Bharatiya Janata Party was declared elected from Bidar.