



Election constitutes an important element in a democratic process that allows citizens to intervene directly in the political process, allowing them to express their political opinions and policy preferences. In India and across the world, the election process has been corrupted by misinformation, exclusion and forgery in electoral rolls, polarisation, violence, etc. These threaten the very essence of free and fair elections in a democracy. The election in Karnataka is a closely monitored affair as it would set a tone for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. As polling for the 224-member Legislative Assembly has already taken place in Karnataka, results announced with the Congress Party winning the majority with 135 seats, the debate shifts to who will be crowned the next CM of Karnataka and how the politics would unfold in the state.

With this introductory speech, Dr. Priyanca Mathur, Head and Associate Professor, CeRSSE formally introduced the Chair and the Panellists. This was followed by Prof. P.S. Jayaramu taking over as a Chair and conducting the session. He started by giving a brief on the rules for a panel discussion. At the outset, he made a few observations on the topic. He observed that the results can be looked upon as a watershed event as it was not just about anti-incumbency, it is beyond that.

According to him, the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) failed to understand the pulse of the poor and marginalised, unemployed youth and rural-urban population affected by price rise/unemployment, etc. The second point he made was that Congress was able to monitor the social coalition and implement it.

After making these points, he handed over the space to Naheed Ataula to share her views. She made some important points. She highlighted that the guarantees made by Congress touched the people's daily life in Karnataka. The memories of the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' for 21 days in October made a huge impact. It covered 7 districts and 51 constituencies out of which Congress won in 37 districts. She also made a point that the blunder committed by the Bomai government in tweaking the reservation matrix and slashing the internal reservation among the SCs helped Congress gain support and win the election.

Professor Sandeep Shastri, then made some important observations. He started by commenting that "the Karnataka verdict was an authentic Kannadiga flavoured verdict" for which he laid out some factors. Firstly, he made a point that Karnataka distinguished between State and National verdicts. Secondly, the election this time was not a transitional election like it was, be it in 1984,

2004 or 2018. Therefore, we have a party getting a clear majority. Another point he made was that Karnataka saw the competition between two narratives: i) Congress narratives were clearly focussed on the state; ii) the narratives of BJP focussed on the protected national issue by national leaders.

Aditya Menon based his opinion agreeing to what other panellists had shared. However, he stated that Karnataka voted differently than the National Election. He highlighted P.M. Modi's popularity at the national level and this had a slight advantage also in Karnataka, especially in Bengaluru. However, he highlighted that his popularity cannot change the course of the election single-handedly. He also observed one important trend that there was no change in the BJP vote share in some areas.

The remarks by the panellist were followed by Prof. Jayaramu carrying forward the discussion by asking the panellist to discuss the points made by each panellist. This was then followed by the question and answer session. The session was very enriching with the plethora of questions posed to the panellists. Some of the questions asked were on the Bangalore voting pattern, religious and ideological polarisation, impact on next year's Lok Sabha elections, issues of the overall need of the people, power of democracy, impact on the middle-class tax-paying population, implementation of national schemes, to name some.

The panel discussion ended with a formal vote of thanks by Dr. Rubina Pradhan and a virtual photo session.



Prof. P.S. Jayaramu sharing his views



Naheed Ataula sharing her views



Prof.Sandeep Shastri sharing his views



Aditya Menon sharing his views