

# The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

November 2024



*“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”*

*– The Mother*

Year 15

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**email:** sadlecjnn@gmail.com, info@resurgentindia.org, URL : www.resurgentindia.org

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**Editor : Ms. Garima Sharma,** B-45, Batra Colony, Village Bharatpur, P.O. Kaushal Ganj, Bilaspur Distt. Rampur (U.P)

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A Monthly National Review

November 2024



## SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

*Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella*

*Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels*

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## **A Declaration**

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

– The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother, Vol. 13, pp. 124-25)

# HIGHLIGHTS

## DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

### **Biden-Harris's Administration's Parting Shot to Russia:**

In the wake of Trump's victory in the US Presidential election, the Biden administration has signalled a rather sharp policy change vis-à-vis Ukraine. It has authorized Ukraine, for the first time, to use long range weapons to strike deep inside Russian territory. It has gone ahead with this decision despite knowing that this might lead to a wider war. However, despite this policy shift, matters have not escalated as was expected, and the war continues at its own pace.

Part of the reason is Germany's unwillingness to authorize Ukraine to deploy its missiles for striking inside Russia. Another reason is that Ukraine itself is now actively seeking peace while defending its own territory. Ukraine has even offered that Russia can keep the territories it has invaded in Donbas region in eastern Ukraine and advance no further, subject to the condition that Ukraine is allowed to become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Russia has also not voiced any public objections to NATO's proposals. Mysteriously however, European countries continue to refuse to let Ukraine join NATO even at the cost of prolongation of the war.

### **Russian Geopolitics Backfires**

For long, Russia has been attempting to craft an anti-West alliance, especially by expanding its strategic relationship with

China, Iran and North Korea. This desperate attempt has now extended to forging alliances with terrorists like Hezbollah as well. In what will further complicate Russia's relationship with Israel, in its recent ground offensive in southern Lebanon, is that it has recovered a tranche of Russian weapons. They were likely supplied from Russia to Syria and from there to Hezbollah. This is symptomatic of the larger pattern being practiced by Russia. In a bid to counter US's influence in the Middle east, Russia is expanding ties with Iranian proxy militias like Hamas, Hezbollah and others.

In recent times, this has brought grief to Russia. With the re-eruption of the Syrian civil war at the behest of Turkey's funding to Syrian rebels fighting against Assad, and their success in taking over major cities in Syria like Aleppo, Russia finds itself in a bind. Already engaged in a war with Ukraine, Russia now finds itself unable to adequately help Assad retain control of Syria. Iran is, likewise, in too weak a position to help Assad. Depending on the course of the Syrian crisis, Russian dreams of establishing counter-hegemony to the US in the Middle east may come crashing down.

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR**

### **ICC's Double Standards**

For an organization that has refused to sufficiently condemn terror sponsors like Iran and its terrorist proxies like Hamas, International Criminal Court's (ICC) arrest warrant against Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, stands out as a mockery of the so-called liberal internationalism and its ideas of justice. In recent times, ICC's activism has made a mockery of international law. Its warrant against Putin was ineffective, and its warrant against Netanyahu is likely to be more so.

Already, after the warrant, some countries came out in support of Israel. France said that the warrant could not apply to Netanyahu or his ministers as Israel was not a member of the ICC. Hungary's Victor Orban too was quick to declare that Netanyahu should freely travel to Hungary without any fear of arrest. The incoming Trump administration has already threatened allies to not comply with the ICC and has termed ICC a 'kangaroo court' which it might sanction and its chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, a 'deranged fanatic', while Biden has termed the arrest warrant as 'outrageous.' Expectedly, activist leaders like Canada's Trudeau have declared that they will arrest Netanyahu if he visits Canada.

ICC's credibility took a further nosedive after its chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, who is behind the recent activism of the court, called on Bangladesh's caretaker Mohammad Yunus in Dhaka recently. In what reeks of hypocrisy, the two discussed humanitarian situation of Rohingyas and the excesses committed by Sheikh Hasina during July-August anti-government uprising. Khan conveniently chose to overlook the ongoing genocide of Hindus and other minorities that has been going on under Yunus.

## **Ceasefire with Hezbollah**

The ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon-based Hezbollah has come as one of the first breakthroughs in the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas. The war with Hezbollah in southern Lebanon has been going on for almost a year, as part of Hezbollah's support to Hamas in Gaza. In the past two months, Israel-Hezbollah escalation intensified as part of a series of electronic attacks by Israel on Hezbollah followed by widespread decimation of Hezbollah's top chiefs and



commanders, leaving the terrorist entity's ranks considerably thin. Having weakened Hezbollah greatly – although Hezbollah continues to possess its bombers, weapons arsenal and rocket capabilities – Israel's acceptance of the ceasefire may be a strategic move to facilitate an end to the war. It also reflects the fact that Israel made only limited gains in southern Lebanon and failed to destroy Hezbollah's rocket capabilities even after two months of ground offensive in southern Lebanon.

The ceasefire agreement is drawn from the UN Security Council Resolution No. 1701 which was signed in the wake of the end of the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, and stipulated Hezbollah's and Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon. The present ceasefire agreement states that Litani river will be the zone of reference. Hezbollah will withdraw its militants to the north of Litani river, while Israel will withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon. Lebanese troops will alone guard the area between Israel and Litani river. The arrangements will be completed within 60 days. However, Israel has warned of resumption of retaliation against Hezbollah in case the latter violates the ceasefire agreement. With the ceasefire in place, Israel can now focus on eliminating Hamas – its major objective in the war – and on dealing with Iran. It will also relieve Israel of at least one front in this war and re-supply its ranks.

## **HINDU GENOCIDE IN BANGLADESH**

The genocide of Hindus in Bangladesh continues unabated, and ISCKON has become the latest target of the Bangladeshi Islamists. Shortly after the massive rally held by Hindus in Chittagong under the banner of *Sanatan Jagran Manch* demanding basic dignity and protection, the Bangladesh government and the country's Islamists unleashed fury on the Hindus,

intensifying their attacks on the community. The Bangladesh government arrested Hindu monk, Chinmoy Krishna Das, under fabricated charges that the saffron Hindu flag at one of his rallies was positioned above the Bangladeshi national flag thereby affronting the ‘secular’ values of the country. These are bizarre charges, as Bangladeshi Constitution proclaims it to be an Islamic country, so the question of secularism does not even arise.

Having arrested the monk on these exaggerated charges, the government in collusion with Islamists has proceeded to continue their harassment and killings of the Hindus. It has filed cases against ISCKON seeking to ban it as a ‘terrorist’ organization. Subsequently, the case was dismissed by the Bangladesh High Court, likely a result of international pressure. When Hindus took out a protest demanding release of the monk, they were heavily put down. In clashes that followed during the protest, a Muslim lawyer, Saiful Islam, was killed. Without evidence, the government is attempting to implicate Hindus in his killing, while the Hindu side has maintained that he was killed by the Islamists as they mistook him for a Hindu lawyer who was there to represent the monk.

The latter is a more probable explanation in the face of the refusal of Bangladesh government to release clear facts, as, in recent times, over 70 lawyers who have attempted to represent Das have been attacked. Das’s main lawyer, Ramen Roy, is presently fighting for his life in a hospital ICU. In what is a further travesty of justice, Muslim lawyers at the court are agitating and threatening that they will not allow anyone to represent Das. As a result, Das’s bail hearing has been postponed to January 2<sup>nd</sup> next year. At the same time, every two to three days, a wave of attacks against Hindus takes places

systematically, the latest one being in Doarabazar in Sunamganj over a “blasphemous” social media post by a Hindu boy which resulted in demolition of over 100 Hindu houses and at least 8 temples in the area, besides serious injuries inflicted on Hindus. When Bangladeshi Hindus tried to crossover to India, they were prevented by the Bangladeshi Border Guard from doing so. Further a bus carrying ISKCON devotees who wanted to go to Kolkata was also attacked in Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh government’s brazen actions in allowing all this to happen show its overconfidence on the global stage. It has already gained legitimacy in western eyes after the so-called sham ‘students revolution’ against Hasina, its biggest benefactor being the Biden administration. The refusal to acknowledge that the students’ revolution was an Islamic revolution has further bolstered Yunus, who has become an expert in playing the victim card. This may explain Bangladesh’s brazen confrontation with India. India – cutting across government and party lines – has issued multiple statements calling for the release of Das and protection of Hindus. RSS and ISKCON have also issued extensive statements condemning the present situation in Bangladesh. Many protests have continuously been taking place all over India, especially in West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. Bangladeshis are being weeded out and Bengal’s doctors and businessmen have refused to treat Bangladeshi patients or do trade across the border, respectively. Bangladesh’s High Commission in Agartala was attacked by protestors. West Bengal’s Mamata Banerjee even demanded stationing UN Peacekeeping forces to protect Hindus in Bangladesh and demanded Indian government’s intervention.

Yet, Bangladesh has brazenly sought confrontation with India, taking offence to India’s official statements, and refusing

to back down. It has also accused India of failing to protect its diplomats at the Agartala High Commission. The Modi government has, so far, responded with a mix of firm statements and diplomatic silence. However, the situation on the ground appears to be changing for the worse.

## **US's PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 United States Presidential elections marks a significant breakthrough in the American political landscape. This is only the second time that a candidate has won Presidential elections non-consecutively. This is also the first time in two decades that a Republican candidate has won, both, electoral college vote as well as the popular vote. Winning 312 electoral college votes and 50% of the popular vote, along with Republicans controlling the Senate, the House of Representatives and with an already conservative Supreme Court composition, Trump commands nearly absolute dominance in his second term. He also won all the seven swing battleground states. This victory came even though a lot more money was donated to Kamala Harris's campaign as compared to the Trump campaign. Despite that, Harris did not add any new state to Democrat strongholds and was not able to improve over Biden's 2020 victory. Her margins in some Democrat-controlled blue states also went down.

There was also a shift in some key demographic groups in favour of Trump. Among the Black Americans, around 16 percent of Black voters supported Trump in 2024, up from 8 percent in 2020. In comparison, 83 percent of Black voters supported Kamala Harris, down from the 91 percent who supported Joe Biden in 2020. Democrats also lost ground among Latin American voters, with 56 percent voting for Harris in

2024 compared to 63 percent for Biden in 2020. Trump's support, among the Latin Americans, grew from 35 percent in 2020 to 42 percent in 2024. Indian Americans, who have traditionally voted for Democrats, also increased their support for Trump to around 30%. Trump – likely due to his denunciation of transgenderism and homosexuality – also holds appeal for religious groups beyond Christianity, with Hindus and Muslims also voting for Trump in several regions.

A major reason for Trump's victory was the success of his Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement. With its purely conservative agenda, religious undertones and anti-globalism, it appealed to a wide section of people, from those who were anti-establishment to those who favoured conservative politics. It also appealed to the workers and labour groups which increasingly viewed Democrats as espousing elite values. With Trump coming back much stronger, he has already signaled his intent to bring sweeping systemic changes, especially in dismantling the “deep state.” This is visible in the key choices for appointments to major positions. Many of them also include a non-Indian Hindu like Tulsi Gabbard and Kashyap Patel, Ramaswami and others. He has signaled his priorities including imposing tariffs on China, Canada and Mexico, and carrying out emergency mass deportations of illegal immigrants.

# STATE ELECTIONS IN MAHARASHTRA AND JHARKHAND

The recently held state assembly elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand cement the trend of the deepening hold of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) at the state level. While the party came back with a massive majority in Maharashtra reversing the losses incurred by it in the Lok Sabha elections earlier this year, it continues to remain in Opposition in Jharkhand although it has retained its vote-share in the latter. In the face of the concerted Hindu unity push by the BJP, the Maharashtra results have dealt a blow to existing powerbrokers in the state, including the politically opportunistic opposition alliance, Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), and the divisive caste-based Maratha quota demonstrators who had sought to polarize the politics in the state.

## A BROAD CONSOLIDATION OF VICTORY

### **Maharashtra:**

The Maharashtra elections were fought by two broad coalitions, each of which consisted of breakaway factions of two major regional parties – Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) – allied to BJP and Congress each. Since the divisions that took place in each of the two parties over the course of the past year, and the endless litigation that followed on the question of who the real parties are, the present elections were like a referendum to decide on the legitimacy of the breakaway factions. The victorious Mahayuti coalition was led by the BJP and consisted of Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena (SHS) and Ajit Pawar-led NCP. The Opposition alliance, MVA,

consisted of Congress, Uddhav Thackrey-led Shiv Sena (SS-UBT) and Sharad Pawar-led NCP(SP).

	Seat share		Vote share (%)	
	2024	Change From 2019	2024	Change From 2019 (percentage points)
MVA <sup>1</sup>	50	-103	35.2	-11.1
Mahayuti <sup>2</sup>	234	+109	49.3	4.3
Independents	2	-4	7.2	4.8
Others	2	-2	8.3	2.1

Source: Lokniti-CSDS

The vote shares and seat shares of the two alliances reflect the massive victory won by the Mahayuti. Within Mahayuti, the BJP alone got 132 seats, becoming the single largest party in the state, while its coalition partners, Shiv Sena and NCP received 57 and 41 seats respectively. Within the Opposition MVA alliance, the Congress received only 16 seats, while SS-UBT and NCP-SP were reduced to 20 and 10 seats respectively.

Even the strike rates (seats won relative to seats contested) of the ruling Mahayuti alliance were impressive, with BJP recording a strike rate of over 90%, Shiv Sena with strike rate of over 70% and NCP with a strike rate of nearly 70%. In contrast, within the Opposition MVA alliance, Congress's strike rate was just up to 16%, SS-UBT's strike rate was hovering at around 21% and NCP-SP's strike rate was the worst at around

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<sup>1</sup> Vote shares of key MVA parties: INC (12.4%); CPI-M (0.3%); SS-UBT (10%); NCP-SP (11.3%).

<sup>2</sup> Vote shares of key Mahayuti parties: BJP (26.8%); SHS (12.4%); NCP (9%).

12%, recording Sharad Pawar's one of the worst performances in his political career.

## Jharkhand:

In Jharkhand, the incumbent INDIA state government led by Hemant Soren's Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) gave its strongest performance yet. However, it is significant that this performance came not at the expense of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), but at the expense of smaller, third parties.

	Seat share		Vote share (%)	
	2024	Change from 2019	2024	Change from 2019
INDIA <sup>3</sup>	56	+9	44.3	+9
NDA <sup>4</sup>	24	-1	38.1	+4
Others	1	-8	17.6	-13

Source: Lokniti-CSDS

From the vote share and seat share distribution, it is clear that both INDIA and NDA increased their vote shares at the expense of smaller, third parties, with INDIA gaining more. In terms of seat share also, while NDA lost just one seat due to the loss faced by BJP's ally, All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) which won only one out of the ten seats it contested, the INDIA bloc gained eight out of nine seats at the expense of smaller, third parties.

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<sup>3</sup> Party-wise seat share and vote share of key members: JMM: 34 (23.4%); INC: 16 (15.6%); RJD: 4 (3.4%).

<sup>4</sup> Party-wise seat share and vote share of key members: BJP: 21 (33.2%); AJSUP: 1 (3.5%); JD-U: 1 (0.8%); LJP-RV: 1 (0.6%).



Amongst the most significant takeaways is that despite the momentous win of INDIA bloc, BJP has emerged as the single-largest party in terms of vote share, with a vote share of 33.2%. This is followed by JMM's vote share of 23.4%. There is nearly a gap of ten percentage points between the two. It shows that BJP has been pulled down due to lack of strong allies.

### ***Performance in reserved seats in Jharkhand:***

	INDIA						NDA						Others					
	2024		Change From 2019		2024		Change From 2019		2024		Change From 2019		2024		Change From 2019			
	Seat Share	Vote Share (%)	Seat Share	Vote Share (%)	Seat Share	Vote Share (%)	Seat Share	Vote Share (%)	Seat Share	Vote Share (%)	Seat Share	Vote Share (%)	Seat Share	Vote Share (%)	Seat Share	Vote Share (%)		
<b>ST</b>	27	50.7	+2	+7.7	1	35.1	-1	+0.8	0	14.3	-1	-8.4						
<b>SC</b>	5	44	+2	+11.6	4	40.1	-2	+2.5	0	15.9	0	-14.1						
<b>GEN</b>	24	41.3	+5	+9.1	19	39.2	+1	+5.9	1	19.4	-7	-15.1						

Source: Lokniti-CSDS

Even from performance in the reserved seats, it is clear that NDA lost out particularly in the ST-dominated seats. While the gap is narrower in SC-dominated seats and in General/Unreserved seats, the failure of BJP to mobilize the tribals has been the main cause of its defeat in the state.

Despite focusing on issues such as infiltration from Bangladesh and attempting Hindu consolidation on the basis of tribal culture, the NDA lost in 27 out of the 28 ST-reserved seats it contested across Jharkhand, out of which BJP had contested 25 seats. The lone seat it won was Seraikella due to Champai Soren. It had won three ST-reserved seats in 2019. This time it lost Khunti and Torpa seats to JMM. This is despite the fact that RSS affiliates like Vanvasi Kalyan Ashrams – who have been engaging the tribals across the country – have been working since many decades to wean the tribals away from Christianity.

## REGION-WISE VOTE SHARE:

### Maharashtra:

In terms of the regional spread of vote shares, the ruling Mahayuti dominated north Maharashtra, Konkan and western Maharashtra with over 50% vote share. It also dominated metropolis centers like Mumbai-Thane (with 49% vote share) and rural Congress's bastion of Vidarbha (with 48.1% vote share).

	MVA (%)		Mahayuti (%)		Others (%)	
	2024	Change from 2019	2024	Change from 2019	2024	Change from 2019
Konkan	39.5	-4.1	50.9	2.3	9.6	1.8
Marathawada	35.7	-8.1	45.3	11.8	19	-3.7
Mumbai-Thane	34.1	-7.1	49	0.6	16.9	6.5
North Maharashtra	28.5	-16.4	53.5	8.1	18	8.3
Vidarbha	36.1	-9.4	48.1	6.4	15.8	3
Western Maharashtra	37.1	-7.1	50.7	7.3	12.2	-0.1

Source: Lokniti-CSDS

The ruling Mahayuti's dominance across regions was further cemented by its victory in the Marathawada region, which has been the epicenter of Maratha quota protests. Incidentally, this became the region from which the Mahayuti gained the sharpest increase in its vote share, showing that the consolidation of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) had worked in its favour besides the fact that even Marathas voted for the Mahayuti in significant numbers. Consequently, the Mahayuti registered a sweep by winning 40 out of 46 seats in the Marathawada region,<sup>5</sup> while the MVA secured merely 5 seats in the region.<sup>6</sup> This was a great rebound from the Mahayuti's performance in the Lok Sabha elections where it won just 1 out of 8 seats from the region.

Further, even in seats with high Muslim presence, the Mahayuti performed better than the MVA, gaining 40% vote share (an increase of 4.4 percentage points over 2019) compared to MVA's 38% vote share (a loss of 14.2 percentage points over 2019).

In the case of both Marathawada victory despite the odds of quota agitation and the victory in Muslim-dominated seats, one of the main reasons was consolidation among the Hindus. Extensive campaigns by Yogi Adityanath and PM Modi through slogans such as '*Batenge toh katenge*' and '*Ek hain toh safe hain*' have worked well to unite the Hindus across caste, class and regional divides.

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<sup>5</sup> Here also BJP won the highest number of seats at 18, while Shiv Sena and NCP won 13 and 9 seats respectively. BJP even won Marathawada seats like Hingoli and Partur which have had sympathy for Uddhav Thackeray.

<sup>6</sup> Out of the 5 seats won by MVA in the region, Congress secured just 1 seat (Latur), while SS-UBT won 3 seats and NCP-SP won 1 seat (Beed).

# Jharkhand:

In Jharkhand, while BJP was able to make up for some of its vote share through urban dominated seats where NDA received 49% vote compared to INDIA’s 40.4%, it was not enough to offset INDIA’s win across semi-urban and rural seats as well as across the various regions.

	INDIA (vote share %)		NDA (vote share %)		Others (vote share %)	
	2024	Change from 2019	2024	Change from 2019	2024	Change from 2019
Santhal Pargana	52.2	12.6	38.3	1.5	9.5	-14.1
North Chotanagpur	38.3	8	39.7	7	21.9	-15
Kolhan	46.1	3.4	36	5.3	17.8	-8.8
South Chotanagpur	48.2	10.8	37.6	2.4	14.2	-13.2
Palamu	39	10.1	36.8	0.9	24.2	-11

Source: Lokniti-CSDS

While the NDA gained minor vote share across all regions, instead of losing votes, the gains have not been enough to make a difference to seat shares. Particularly jarring has been NDA’s inability to win tribal votes in the Santhal Pargana region, where INDIA bloc received more than 50% vote share enabling it to win 17 out of 18 seats in the region, despite heavy campaigning by the NDA and putting in the best efforts. Here it is significant to note that as per official data submitted by the

Government of India in an affidavit in Jharkhand High Court, the tribal population of the Santhal Pargana region has declined by 16%, while the Muslim population has increased by 20% to 40% in six districts of this region and the number of Christians in the region has increased by 6000 times (Ranjan, 2024).

This changing demography might help explain why despite vigorous campaigning, BJP struggled to beat JMM across the state, but especially in Santhal Pargana.

## CASTE AND COMMUNITY VOTING PATTERNS

### Maharashtra:

Hindu unity was a major factor in voters’ psyche, and this has reflected in the caste and community-wise voting patterns across the state.

#### *Vote share across caste and community (%):*

	MVA	Mahayuti	Others
Upper caste	25	63	12
Maratha-Kunbi	32	54	14
Other OBCs	26	60	14
SCs	25	34	41
Adivasis	56	39	5
Muslims	55	22	23
Others	31	51	18

Source: Lokniti-CSDS

The Mahayuti received significant support across all caste groups, enabling it to forge a larger framework of Hindu unity. Even within Mahayuti, the BJP saw a rise in support from Marathas as well as the OBCs, besides the upper caste vote. While the Dalits voted for the Mahayuti in lesser numbers, they did not even vote overwhelmingly for the MVA, instead voting for other smaller parties. This was particularly true for the politically aware Buddhist Dalits and those belonging to the Mahar caste. The Adivasi support for the Mahayuti too was lukewarm, and their votes went majorly to the MVA.

## **Jharkhand:**

Caste and community-wise vote shares in Jharkhand show immense division among the Hindu votes, and a consolidation of minority and tribal votes in favour of INDIA bloc, likely influenced by demographic changes in the states.

### ***Vote share across caste and community (%):***

	<b>INDIA</b>	<b>NDA</b>	<b>JLKM</b>	<b>Others</b>
Upper caste	19	66	2	12
OBC	26	47	15	13
Dalit	38	39	2	21
Oraon	72	20	-	8
Santhal	42	48	5	5
Munda	60	25	3	11
Other ST	55	31	-	15
Muslims	90	6	1	3

Source: Lokniti-CSDS

While the NDA managed to garner support across upper castes and OBCs, the Dalit votes got almost evenly divided. Among all the tribal categories, INDIA bloc outperformed the NDA, while Muslims – whose population has rapidly increased in Jharkhand to nearly 24% (TOI, 2024) – voted almost entirely for the INDIA bloc. Within the tribals, the increasing proportion of Christians may have led to adverse outcomes for the NDA. Within the Oraon tribal group, INDIA bloc received 72% vote share. It is interesting to note that Oraon is not only the largest tribal group in Jharkhand, but nearly a third of its population is Christian. Same is the case with the Munda tribe – which has over 33% Christians – where INDIA bloc received 60% vote share. Among the Santhals, while Christians are less than 10%, the vote got divided like in the case of Dalits.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

The Maharashtra and Jharkhand election results have heralded new equations for both the states. In Maharashtra, the results indicate the disruption of the political equations that have dominated state-level politics over the last few decades. In Jharkhand, what may appear innocuously as a continuity of the incumbent government is underlaid by the sinister emergency of long-term demographic change which the national political leaders urgently need to act on.

The following are some of the important takeaways that will resonate in the years to come:

First, the Maharashtra elections have cemented the legitimacy of the new political configurations that have taken place over the last two years. The question over the ‘real’ Shiv Sena and the ‘real’ NCP that has faced endless litigation in the courts

and at the hands of the Speaker has finally been decisively answered by the voters. Shinde-led Shiv Sena had fought the battle on the plank that Uddhav had lost touch with the real Hindutva ideology of Shiv Sena by allying with the Congress and with Sharad Pawar's NCP-SP, and that he had betrayed Bal Thackrey's legacy. This has resonated with the voters. In the case of NCP too, Sharad Pawar's attempts to undercut Ajit Pawar and his blatant nepotism, arrogance and opportunism made him the biggest loser of this election.

Second, the Maharashtra elections showed the limitations of political opportunism that was expediently being practiced by the MVA in a bid to fool the voters, which is symptomatic of the larger malaise in the INDIA alliance even at the national level – an alliance merely formed to prevent the division of anti-BJP votes, but without any ideology or concrete appeal. In Maharashtra, this farce of political opportunism – and explicit minority appeasement – outweighed the drama to receive public sympathy in the wake of splits in Uddhav's Shiv Sena and Sharad Pawar's NCP. The latter was short-lived in the minds of the people and soon the public was reminded of the real reason for the turbulence in Maharashtra politics over the past few years – the original betrayal of the 2019 state elections mandate by Uddhav Thackrey based on the egregious assumption that BJP did not stand a chance in Maharashtra without him. It was because of this unmitigated calculation and opportunism that Uddhav decided to drastically steer Shiv Sena away from Hindutva and towards the 'secular', minority-appeasing camp led by the Congress. The final change may not have taken place immediately in the public psyche, but the implications of this betrayal are finally catching up with Uddhav.



Third, Hindu consolidation has worked at the very grassroots levels in Maharashtra, mainly due to meticulous efforts put in by the RSS cadre. After almost three decades, there was a consolidation of Maratha and OBC votes in favour of the Mahayuti, defying all attempts by quota activists to create a divide between them. This was also facilitated by RSS's groundwork to mobilize the Hindus. For the RSS, Maharashtra has an additional symbolic importance with the organization headquartered at Nagpur. Accordingly, RSS made efforts to mobilize voters especially in urban areas – which are usually afflicted by factors like voter apathy – like Nagpur, Pune and Mumbai, ensuring a high voter turnout in favour of the BJP, and reaching out to not only traditional BJP voters, but also fence-sitters. It conducted its gatherings through informal and apolitical communication aimed at uniting the people along cultural and religious lines, without explicitly doing propaganda for the BJP.

The RSS's active support to the BJP in these elections is in contrast with its lack of support during the Lok Sabha elections, where it did not support BJP's opportunistic alliance with the Ajit Pawar-led NCP and even blamed the latter for the Lok Sabha loss. In these elections, RSS has come to terms with the alliance provided that Devendra Fadnavis should lead the government in the event of Mahayuti's win.

Finally, the RSS's and the Sangh Parivar's Hindutva mobilization that worked in Maharashtra appears to have yielded the opposite results in Jharkhand. The Jharkhand results show that despite Hindutva outreach among tribals over the last few decades, the rot of demographic change could not be averted. While in the initial years, Christian missionary conversions

posed a major challenge to preserving tribal identity, in recent times, the rapid growth of Muslim population has magnified the challenge even further. Hindu-Muslim clashes, communal disturbances during Hindu festivals, and attacks on Hindus in certain areas have become increasingly frequent in recent times in the state, with the situation beginning to resemble the political realities in West Bengal under the Mamata Bannerjee government.

While in these elections, BJP has been able to retain and increase its vote share in Jharkhand, this is merely a temporary phenomenon in the face of the tide of demographic changes. Even in urban areas, BJP was undercut by the Congress, while JMM made a sweep in rural and tribal areas. Going forward, this new structural reality must be kept in mind by the BJP in Jharkhand, with the state increasingly going out of its grasp.

## CONCLUSION

If there is one significant aspect that both the elections have brought out, it is that while nationalist cultural mobilization is indispensable, it is not enough to bring about lasting change if it is merely used in an expedient manner. Having learnt the right lessons from their Lok Sabha setback, the BJP is not now shying away from deploying clear and blunt Hindutva rhetoric – and its effectiveness has been seen in Maharashtra. But as Jharkhand results show, there is an urgent need to take the Hindutva and nationalism communication beyond mere rhetoric and slogans, and act on it.

The tendency of the BJP to mobilize Hindus just when elections are round the corner will not work to create lasting and effective change in face of the serious challenges being faced by a rapidly rising brand of fundamentalist Islam across

the country. The latter is creating structural changes likely through population increase and probable strategic settlements – a trend that has even been witnessed in hill states like Uttarakhand. National and cultural mobilization needs to actively proceed regardless of electoral cycles, lest the country witnesses the transformation of more states into the West Bengal model.

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## FALSITY OF FANATICISM

“All fanaticism is false, because it is a contradiction of the very nature of God and of Truth. Truth cannot be shut up in a single book, Bible or Veda or Koran, or in a single religion. The Divine Being is eternal and universal and infinite and cannot be the sole property of the Mussulmans or of the Semitic religions only, – those that happened to be in a line from the Bible and to have Jewish or Arabian prophets for their founders. Hindus and Confucians and Taoists and all others have as much right to enter into relation with God and find the Truth in their own way. All religions have some truth in them, but none has the whole truth; all are created in time and finally decline and perish.”

– **Sri Aurobindo**  
(CWSA 32: 109)