

Jharkhand's big picture, the key elements

The electorate faced two alternative narratives, but the emphatic victory of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led alliance was based on a campaign that struck a chord with voters

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A State-level party has, yet again, caused a roadblock for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). While details fit into the jigsaw puzzle of explaining victories and losses, the big picture presented by Jharkhand has two key elements. First, it was about the tenacity and the ability of State-level forces to face and respond to all-India intrusions and, second, the tough competition between regional identity-based politics centred around Adivasis *vis-à-vis* an attempt to draw in Adivasis toward a set of aggressive and all-India concerns that are centred on cultural identity.

The two sides
At the tactical level, the emphatic victory of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-led alliance was a victory: of effective coalition management and of a campaign that focused on issues that struck a chord with voters. But beyond that, Jharkhand saw a clear competition between two alternative narratives. The JMM-led government was defending its track record in governance and its image of representing tribal interests. The BJP-led alliance sought to present a wider narrative to try and appeal to a wider cross-section and aggressively attack the incumbent government on non-performance and high levels of corruption. The BJP's narrative also had a strong dose of Hindutva mobilisation that sat awkwardly with the Adivasis of Jharkhand's many tribal groups. The results indicate that the JMM alliance was able to hold on to its tribal vote and make inroads in non-



What was in the sauce: 'The victory of the INDIA coalition was closely linked to the support enjoyed by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in the tribal pockets and the corollary support from its alliance partners in non-tribal areas'. ANI

tribal areas on account of its alliance with the Congress. While the BJP did well in the non-tribal belt, it was not able to make deeper inroads in tribal areas. In the winning alliance, the JMM was the leader, winning 80% of the seats it contested. The Congress clearly benefited from being the junior alliance partner, securing a strike rate of just over 50%. The Lokniti-CSDS survey (*see methodology*) provides some indications of what contributed to the INDIA coalition's win. While it scored in terms of better coordination within the alliance which brought together a diverse social coalition and support across regions, the NDA coalition depended largely on the BJP's efforts. There was a much fairer distribution of seats within the INDIA coalition while the NDA saw

the BJP contest seven of every 10 seats. The INDIA coalition's united message worked to its advantage. It won support across age groups, did very well in rural areas, drew strong support from the poor and middle classes and the less educated, and finally, built a social coalition of support that included key segments among the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, Muslims and Yadavs. The diverse nature of its social coalition reflected the impact of the different parties in the coalition which included the JMM, the Congress, Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Communist parties.

Voters and polarisation
The Lokniti-CSDS survey clearly indicates the strong levels of polarisation among voters. Two thirds of them who were fully sa-

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tified with the Soren government, voted for the INDIA coalition. On the other hand, two thirds of those fully dissatisfied with the incumbent government voted for the NDA, suggesting that more than satisfaction, voters' prior decision to vote for a particular coalition was crucial. While net satisfaction with the Narendra Modi government was much higher than that with the Soren government, the fact that this was a State election seemed to matter. The support for the party was clearly central to the voting decision, with more than half the respondents saying they cast their vote keeping in mind the party

concerned. Data indicate that voters were not very happy with the development record on the ground. They believed that the state of industrialisation and corruption had worsened in the past five years, while the situation regarding communal violence and naxalism had improved. Yet, two factors need to be considered. First, those who highlighted unemployment, poverty, inflation and the lack of development as factors continued to invest in the INDIA coalition. Second, women voters seem to have favoured the INDIA coalition in larger numbers. The impact of the Maiya Samman Yojana appeared to be a factor.

Role of leaders
Yet another factor aiding the INDIA coalition was the perception among voters

that State-level issues were central to this election. More than half of those who took this stand favoured the winning coalition. On the other hand, just one in every 10 persons who believed that State issues mattered voted for NDA candidates. The impact of national leaders in supporting the coalition they led was also visible. Most of those who voted for the BJP endorsed the role of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in their voting choice. Similarly, when reflecting on the role of Rahul Gandhi, supporters of the INDIA coalition clearly highlighted his impact. He-manth Soren was the preferred Chief Minister choice of one-third of the respondents. Thus, while the BJP banked largely on the charisma of Mr. Modi, the INDIA coalition had a combination of national-

A factor that propelled the INDIA coalition to power was the perception that State-level issues were central to this election

and State-level leaders who contributed to heightened support for its candidates. Thus, the victory of the INDIA coalition was closely linked to the support enjoyed by the JMM in the tribal pockets and the corollary support from its alliance partners in non-tribal areas. It scored over the NDA in securing support across key demographic indicators. Though there was a strong perception of increased corruption under the incumbent government, it was still voted back as other key factors emerged as key influencers determining voter choice. The BJP did try to mobilise voters on issues of the Uniform Civil Code and Bangladeshi infiltrators, but voters were more concerned with their local identity issues – as is seen from the strong feeling voters expressed on the question of Sarna identity. Except for the Santhal community, the BJP was not able to attract many among other Adivasi groups. In the long run, the challenge for the BJP will be to connect with Adivasis. How it manages that with its overall ambition to also popularise Hindutva will decide the future course of political competition in the State.

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Methodology

The findings are from the Jharkhand Assembly Election Study 2024 that was conducted by the Lokniti programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi, between November 12-19, 2024. A total of 3,035 respondents were interviewed across 30 Assembly Constituencies and 150 polling stations of Jharkhand.

Using multi-stage random sampling, this procedure ensured that the selected sample was fully representative of the cross-section of voters. The constituencies where the survey was conducted were randomly selected using the probability proportional to size method (adjusting the probability of choosing a particular constituency according to the size of its electorate). Thereafter, five polling stations were selected in each of the sampled constituencies using the systematic random sampling method. Finally, 40 respondents were selected at random using the systematic random sampling method from the electoral rolls of the sampled polling stations. Of these 40, we set a target of 20 interviews per polling station. Once we identified our sample, trained field investigators conducted face-to-face interviews using a pre-designed mobile App. The questionnaire was translated into Hindi. Though the sample is relatively small, the total number of voters interviewed represent the social reality of the voters in Jharkhand, i.e., the sample is truly representative with regard to the social composition of the State. Weights were applied to make corrections for under-representation of any social groups. Weights were also applied based on the actual result. The study was directed by Sanjay Kumar, Suhas Palshikar and Sandeep Shastri.

The issue of governments, track records

Sandeep Shastri

Did the performance of the central and State governments impact on the voting preference of the voters in Jharkhand? The Lokniti-CSDS survey indicates that voting was largely based on local specificities. Further, the party preference of voters appears to influence their analysis of the performance of the central and State governments. Voters in Jharkhand were positive in their assessment of both the central and State governments. There was a marginally higher level of satisfaction with the central government. If one were to view net satisfaction (satisfaction minus dissatisfaction) with the two levels of government, the central government had a six-percentage point higher assessment than the State government. This assessment was largely on party lines. Two-thirds of those fully satisfied with the central government voted for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) candidates (68%). On the other hand, seven of every 10 persons of those fully dissatisfied with the central government favoured the INDIA coalition (*Table 1*). When it came to the State government, two thirds of those fully satisfied with the State government favoured the INDIA coalition, while two thirds of those fully dissatisfied with the State government voted for the NDA (*Table 2*). This highlights the pos-

Table 1: Satisfaction with central government and party choice

Satisfaction with the work done by the BJP-led NDA government at Centre	Party voted for (%)	
	INDIA	NDA
Fully satisfied (37%)	23	68
Somewhat satisfied (36%)	52	26
Somewhat dissatisfied (12%)	60	22
Fully dissatisfied (8%)	71	6

Note: Rest voted for other parties

Table 2: Satisfaction with State government and party choice

Satisfaction with the work done by the State government	Party voted for (%)	
	INDIA	NDA
Fully satisfied (29%)	62	27
Somewhat satisfied (41%)	44	37
Somewhat dissatisfied (13%)	32	54
Fully dissatisfied (10%)	9	65

Note: Rest voted for other parties

sibility that satisfaction and vote choice may not have a 'cause-effect' relationship. Instead, voters' predetermined choices shape their assessment of other issues including the performance of the governments.

Other issues
How did respondents assess progress on key issues? There was a lukewarm response to progress on industrialisation. There was a visible assertion about the rise of corruption in the last five years. Respondents felt that both naxal attacks and communal violence had reduced. They also felt that religious harmony remained more or less the same (*Table 3*). Barring corruption, the less critical assessment of the government on other

key parameters could well explain the success of the JMM-led coalition. The survey also indicated the unhappiness of the respondents with rising inflation and shrinking employment opportunities. On availability of drinking water, improvement of roads, performance of government schools, supply of electricity, availability of health-care facilities and the safety of women, a majority said that these had

Table 3: Voter Perception of Key issues over the last five years (%)

In the last five years, have the following things...	Increased	Remained the same	Decreased
Industrialisation	13	37	38
Naxal attacks	13	30	47
Corruption	36	26	31
Communal violence	22	29	40
Religious harmony	27	51	13

Note: Rest did not respond

Table 4: Public perception of changes in key sectors (%)

In the last five years, have the following things...	Increased	Remained the same	Decreased
Inflation	60	19	17
Employment opportunities	18	31	45
Drinking water	37	46	12
Condition of roads	36	45	15
Government schools	32	50	13
Supply of electricity	46	37	13
Health-care services	30	52	13
Security of women	30	52	12

Note: Rest did not respond

Upper castes and OBCs supported the NDA; there was overwhelming Adivasi backing for the INDIA coalition

	Party voted for in Assembly Election 2024 (%)			
	INDIA	NDA	JMKM	Others
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

improved or remained the same (*Table 4*). Thus, the absence of a strong negative reaction to the State government, save on the question of corruption, would have helped the in-

cumbent government win another term.

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The agriculture welfare schemes, farmer focus

**Kirti Sharma
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Agriculture remains the primary source of livelihood for most of Jharkhand's population. Farmers, who are the backbone of the State's economy, were the focus of the promises and policies made by two alliances, i.e. the INDIA coalition and the NDA. The INDIA alliance's decisive victory in the State has sparked much debates on voting patterns and the factors of influence. The Lokniti-CSDS survey sought to gauge farmers' opinions on agriculture welfare schemes and their influence on vote choice. State policies primarily targeting farming households garnered greater satisfaction among full-time farmers, with over half the voters (55%) leaning to voters the INDIA alliance, compared to one-third (29%) supporting the NDA. Similarly, among part-time farmers, nearly four in 10 (42%) strongly support the INDIA alliance, thus maintaining its lead but with a narrower margin of 4% (*Table 1*).

The welfare aspect
The data reveal a clear trend where beneficiaries of major agricultural schemes favoured the INDIA coalition over the NDA even in the case of central schemes. It suggests no direct link between welfare scheme benefits and voting preferences. Central government

Table 1: Farming households preferred INDIA over NDA

Type of farming households	Overall	Party voted for (%)	
		INDIA	NDA
Full-time farming household	27	55	29
Part-time farming household	30	42	38
Not engaged in farming	37	39	44

Table 2: Beneficiaries of farmers' welfare schemes voted for INDIA coalition; mainly for the State farming schemes

Welfare schemes for the farmers in Jharkhand		Overall	Party voted for? (%)	
			INDIA	NDA
PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN)	Beneficiaries	36	50	37
	Non-beneficiaries	48	46	35
Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PM-FBY)	Beneficiaries	26	53	35
	Non-beneficiaries	60	46	35
Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY)	Beneficiaries	17	56	34
	Non-beneficiaries	67	46	35
Jharkhand Krishi Rin Mafi Yojana	Beneficiaries	24	58	30
	Non-beneficiaries	63	44	35
Jharkhand Rajya Fasal Rahat Yojana	Beneficiaries	14	61	33
	Non-beneficiaries	69	46	35

schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN) were availed of by one-third of the voters (36%)/ On the other hand, 26% and 17% were the beneficiaries of other notable central government schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PM-FBY) and Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY), respectively, but a greater proportion among them voted for the INDIA coalition. Interestingly, even in the case of State government schemes, the INDIA

coalition enjoys nearly equal support from beneficiaries (24%) of the Jharkhand Krishi Rin Mafi Yojana and from beneficiaries (14%) of the Jharkhand Rajya Fasal Rahat Yojana (*Table 2*). A significant portion of both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries remain inclined toward the INDIA coalition, reflecting the limited relevance of the schemes in terms of their impact on farmers' voting behaviour in the State.

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