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ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: The Hindu ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE: 15/4/2022

Multiple factors at play in 'sympathy seat'

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BELAGAVI

Belagavi Lok Sabha bypoll was initially thought of as a "single-factor" election where "sympathy" will play an overwhelming role. The situation, however, has turned out to be far more complex as the polling day is nearing.

POLL PITCH

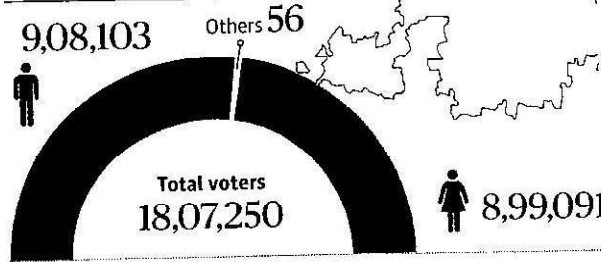
BJP's choice of Mangala Angadi, wife of the former Union Minister Suresh Angadi whose death necessitated the bypoll, was obviously in anticipation of sympathy votes. So much so most BJP local leaders referred to Belagavi as "sympathy seat".

Other factors

However, as campaign has progressed, other factors are cropping up. Caste affiliations of the candidates, the extent of active campaigning for the BJP candidate by Ramesh Jarikiholi (accused in the sex CD scandal) and his brothers, and the Shiv Sena supporting the local MES candidate and Maratha leader Shubham Shelke are all expected to have a bearing on voter behaviour.

In the initial days, most BJP leaders spoke extensively about the contributions of the late Minister and how

Belagavi Lok Sabha constituency



Key candidates



Polling stations

326

Candidates in the fray

12

electing his wife would be continuing the legacy. Ms. Angadi, in her first speech, described her late husband as "a COVID warrior who died on duty". In more than one rally, she broke down while speaking of him.

However, this has been changing slowly. On the last day for withdrawal of nominations, it became clear that Ms. Angadi is the only prominent Lingayat candidate and Satish Jarkiholi of the Congress an important non-Lingayat leader.

It is expected that "upper" caste voters and some communities who are ideologically inclined to the BJP would rally around Ms. Angadi. On his two visits to the city, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa has held meetings with leaders of Lingayats, Marathas, Jains, Vaishyas, weavers, goldsmiths, Kurubas, and Koli Kabbaligas.

Mr. Satish Jarkiholi, who belongs to the Valmiki community and is an elder sibling of Mr. Ramesh Jarkiholi, has tried to build a persona as a leader of AHINDA (minorities, backward classes, and SC/ST communities). He founded the NGO Manava Bandhutva Vedike that has worked among

them. It has branches in most taluks has done extensive work against blind beliefs.

Meanwhile, Mr. Balachandra Jarkiholi has announced that the brothers would campaign for the BJP. But it is not clear whether this will pull the Jarkiholi family vote away from Mr. Satish Jarkiholi. The impact of the CD scandal on the election also remains an "X factor". Sanjay Raut, Shiv Sena leader, has addressed a rally in support of Mr. Shelke. This may cut into some portion of the Maratha vote that has gone to the BJP in previous elections.

Brothers' campaign

There is no ground data on the population of various communities, though political parties believe that Marathas, Lingayats, Jains, and Valmikis are more densely populated in Belagavi district than elsewhere in the State.

Other issues with some significance are the influence Ms. Angadi holds over women voters, disappointment among the BJP cadre about its top leadership supporting dynastic politics despite opposing it in the Congress, the rising fuel prices, and the new farm laws.