Minorities, Democracy and Capitalism

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December 2016
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Introduction

India, as a country of diverse people and huge inequality was an appropriate ground to experiment whether democracy could address the question of inequality and deprivation. At the very outset of the birth of the nation, the communal clashes between majority community and minority community posed the question as to whether a political system could evolve that could serve 'public' cause beyond the identities. These questions are still relevant even after seven decades of independence.

There is a wider consensus that absolute poverty in India has been reduced in past two decades, and this achievement is not primarily through a political process. Thus, on the one hand there are questions raised about the efficacy of political system to reduce poverty and inequality, on the other hand, what exactly is happening to the political system through new economic processes is under scrutiny. There is evidence (e.g. Jaffrelot, 2001; Radhakrishan, 2004; Pingle and Varshney, 2006; Rodrik, 2016) to support that a broad-based politics that provided representation and voice for diverse sections of society has disappeared. New economic processes, primarily facilitated through globalization, urgently require us to search for alternatives.

This paper is an attempt to search for alternatives for minority representation in political spaces in Indian context. The relative deprivation that minority communities are experiencing all over the world is threatening the project of democracy itself. The median vote theory assumes that in democracies, policies tend to be skewed towards benefiting the median voter. However, there are many scholars (e.g. Persson and Tabellini, 1994; Alessina and Rodrik, 1994; Milanovic 1999) who have pointed out the limits of the application of median voter theory in contexts like India. India is also experiencing a surge in identity politics. Therefore, how the question of minority deprivation could be addressed through democracy becomes extremely

relevant. This paper is an attempt to find innovative political solutions to the marginalization in the context of new economic developments.

State of Scholarship on Muslim Political Representation

Most vibrant debates on the question of minority representation took place in pre-independent times, and scholarship matching that era is yet to unfold in India. Ambedkar (1947) in his articulation in 'State and Minorities' has been crystal clear on the position of proportional representation for minorities. With the rejection of this proposal, the larger debate came to a closure. The silence that followed on the debates of minority representation was accompanied with an accommodative politics (with reference to minority groups) that the Congress party generated across the country. By early 1980s, the emergence of regional parties and later the rise of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has forced open the question of minority representation.

In the absence of proportional representation for minorities in Indian democracy, how the interests of minority groups are accommodated is an important subject on which there are limited studies in Indian context. Sachar Committee Report (2006) pointed out the nature of delimitation of political constituencies as the key reason for poor representation of Muslims in Parliament and state assemblies. Ansari (2006) has looked at the statistics on nominations of Muslim candidate by political parties and the success rate to Parliament for the duration of 1952-2004 and have concluded that except for Loksabha elections of 1980 and 1986 in this duration, more than 50% of political deprivation took place. Ahmed (2008) has built on existing studies and argued that political representation needs to be discussed at three levels, namely legal-constitutional, social-equality, and secular participation.

It is in this context, micro studies are required to generate evidence on the same so that emerging broad patterns could be identified. Research project

supported by Planning, programme Monitoring and Statistics Department of Government of Karnataka (2015) at National Law School of India University took this challenge and generated knowledge on the nature of political representation of minorities in Karnataka (see Chapter 10). This paper is an attempt to advance research in this line and to compare the findings with other states in the country.

It is important to distinguish between the concepts of representation and participation. Though Greek philosophers had advocated the criticality of participation in democracy, in the absence of direct participation in democracies, representation as a concept has emerged critically. Thus, a triadic relationship becomes inevitable (Chandhoke 2009): 1) citizens whose interest needs to be represented; 2) democratic state which has the institutions to respond to the demands of citizens as represented and 3) representatives who mediate between the citizens and the state.

The concept of representation is theorized in the discipline of political science to significant extent. Hanna Pitkin in her classical book on *The Concept of Representation* (1967) summarises these theoretical positions. For this paper, the views of Edmund Burke elaborated by Pitkin are hugely relevant. Burke talks about two kinds of representation, namely representation as delegation, and representation as trustee. This distinction is too simplistic, and masks the complexities of multiple interests. Today there is a consensus that representatives are not merely acting as post-offices or channels to connect the citizens and the state (Laclau 1996). Rather, representative forms his own views using the stimuli coming from different citizens and makes a representation considering the context, what other interests (than the content of representation) gets affected through representation, and at what level the representation takes place. These complexities have brought in the distancing that happens in the

process of representation, and a "crisis of representation" is identified to achieve the aims of substantive democracy.

It is here, the roots of deliberative democracy through ways of deepening participation have been explored to inform the representative in the truest sense of political communication. Possibility of different levels of participation in political processes (representation being only one of the forms of participation) exist. This typically ranges from voting, attending political rallies, engaging in consultation, supporting through resources, joining in the political parties or interest groups, holding the positions of political responsibility etc. All of them refer to different levels of engagement to voice concern for an issue to deal with politically. At a later stage of the paper, we will see how different levels of participation is critical to minority representation.

For this paper, the political representation is examined in three interconnected lenses. First, at the system level of politics where the question of legitimacy of political system is taken up when the minority representation (or lack of) happens. Second, at the level of political parties as to whether minority representation is an internalized value for political parties in the context of competition through aggregation of votes. Third, at micro-level of voters as to how much the secular values and equal opportunity for representation is internalized among the citizens.

Data and Method

Among the Indian states, there are only seven states where Hindu population is a minority community population wise (Census 2011). These states are Jammu and Kashmir (28%), Punjab (38%), Arunachal Pradesh (29%), Nagaland (9%), Manipur (41%), Mizoram (3%), and Meghalaya (12%). For an objective analysis, it is important to study whether minority rights of the Hindu citizens are accorded in these states, and to make a comparison with minority communities in other states. In this paper, when we analyse, the minority rights

of Muslim citizens, we have avoided the study of these states. For instance, in Jammu and Kashmir, Muslim community is not minority and therefore, it would be erroneous to study the performance of this community there and to accord it as success for minority community[2]. To draw conclusions for this study, three types of data is used. First, representation of Muslism through ministers in respective state assemblies in major states of India, where Muslim community is a minority community. Then, we examine the parliamentary election data of 2014. We examine the victory margins of Muslim candidates. We draw conclusions for poor representation of Muslims using this data. Third data source we are using is that of Karnataka assembly election data from 2013. We undertake similar analysis as that of Parliamentary data and verify a similar conclusion that is drawn at national level hold true at state level. Based on this, we move on the key argument of the paper, namely what alternatives are available to strengthen representation in the current context of India because the intrinsic connection between capitalism and democracy.

Representation of interests

As many researchers have articulated, there are different levels of political participation and representation (Hay 2002; Hague, Harrop and Breslin 1992). In this section, we are going to examine how representation as ministers in state cabinet takes place for the Muslim community. Table 1 presents data from major states in India. As we can see, there is no corresponding relationship between the per cent of population and elected representatives. For instance, Karnataka has only 5% of MLAs in the assembly while the Muslim population is 10%. Compared to this, West Bengal has 20% of MLAs in the assembly while the Muslim population is 27% there. The Karnataka case and its history of political exclusion has been examined in detail in the study of *Socio-Economic Conditions of Religious Minorities in Karnataka* (2015).

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[2] Of the five parliamentary constituencies, in three seats Muslim candidates won and in two other seats, Muslim candidates were runner-up. However, in other states (Punjab and North-Eastern states), Muslim community is minority.

Among different states of India, three types of mechanisms could be found operating for political representation for minority communities. First, formation of separate party units on religious lines. Successful example is that of Muslim League in Kerala which often contests in coalition with Congress (as United Democratic Front). Second, seats where Muslim population has critical mass, through a working arrangement with dominant political party, a bargaining deal is entered. Third, fostering coalitions at community level. This third model operated for long time in Gujarat, where Muslim communities forged alliance with backward classes there, which was systematically neutralized in the wake of Hindutva politics since 2000s.

Table 1: Muslim Ministers and Percent of Muslim Population in Major Indian State Assemblies, 2016

State	Ruling Party	Per cent of Muslim Population	No. of Ministers (in parenthesis is total number of ministers)	No of MLAs elected (in parenthesis is total number of MLAs in assembly)
Uttarpradesh	SP	19	9 (51)	63(404)
West Bengal	TMC	27	6 (44)	59 (294)
Bihar	JD	17	4 (17)	19 (243)
Karnataka	Cong	10	2 (30)	11(224)
Kerala	CPM	27	2	
Rajasthan	BJP	9	1 (37)	11 (200)
Tamilnadu	AIADMK	6	1(32)	8(234)
Madhya Pradesh	BJP	7	0	
Maharashtra	BJP	12	0	
Uttarkhand	Cong	14	0	
Jharkhand	BJP	15	0	
Chattisgarh	BJP	2	0	
Gujarat	BJP	10	0	

Source: Based on different state government websites

The political history in each state is unique, and without such history, a conclusion could not be drawn on representation. For instance, in the state of

Kerala, there are two dominant minority communities, namely Kerala Congress (primarily representing Christian community of 17%)) and Muslim League (primarily representing Muslim community of 27%). During the last Congress government (2010-2015), there were four ministers from Muslim League and equal number of ministers from Kerala Congress. This created huge discontent among Christian and Muslim leaders belonging to Congress party. Thus, the expression of 'rule by minority' was often used in media to show that the secular fabric of Congress was a compromise, rather than internalized value.

The question of 'representation' through holding a ministerial position has been hugely controversial. Kumar (2014) carried out an analysis of portfolios held by different parties in coalition government in Kerala. He found that both during the left-led government as well as Congress-led governments, ministers from minority parties held the portfolio of education. Since the educational institutions are primarily managed by the minority communities, such an interest could be driving the portfolio allocation rather than the question of 'representation'. Therefore, the 'social presence' of a minority community rather than mere aggregation of number was hugely important when the ministerial portfolios were allocated. In this sense, the minorities were political 'delegates' in a ministry rather than 'representatives'. In the words of Kaviraj (2011: 237), this is a failure of the system: "The working class could cast votes, but evidently, because of their cultural deficiencies, could not represent themselves effectively in a highly discursive form of political exchange. To pursue their collective interests effectively under the given institutional arrangements, they needed to send to legislatures representatives who had the requisite skill".

Representations through ministerial posts have two issues: First, do ministerial posts provide a space for 'representing minority interests'? It is likely that, minority communities are accommodated and vote banks are cemented since their leaders are given positions of power, and thus, signaling

back to community as the ruling party as 'minority friendly'. Such appeasement politics is not suitable for representation. One of the ways to examine the substantive part of representation by minority ministers is to ask the question on performance. If the minister had space to represent minority demands, it could be safely assumed that, justice had been done to the objective of representation. A second issue is how portfolio allocated is viewed in comparative importance. For instance, the ministries of Home, Industry, and Finance are considered to be sought after ministries. A general pattern is the low-key portfolios are given to minority community ministers.

As the history of each state is unique, comparability between states using assembly elections become hugely difficult. Therefore, we can only draw conclusions on the pattern. Therefore, I am examining the most recent Lok Sabha elections to gain insights on the pattern of Muslim candidates being elected. One huge difficulty here is the absence community-wise data for parliamentary constituencies. Despite this difficulty, some conclusions could be drawn from data presented in Table 2.

In Table 2, we are presenting the data for only 55 Loksabha constituencies where Muslim candidates have either won or been runner-up. This pattern indicates that loss of Muslim candidates is evenly spread across in all categories, both for success as well as defeat. This indicates that purely through aggregate numbers, a victory for Muslim candidate may not be possible. Where number is a factor, there will be multiple candidates from the same community. This would indicate that support for the minority candidate has to be ensured through a process through political party gaining acceptance from other social groups. This naturally weakens the candidate's capacity to raise voices in party decision making processes. Therefore, the results presented in the table have to be seen in the context of a massive defeat that. Thus, a larger question emerges. What is the acceptance of the principle of

political representation for minority communities within each political party? Ansari (2006) has shown that the ratio of winning to nominated Muslim candidates in Parliamentary election is very low for BJP (ratio of 1:10) and BSP (ratio of 1: 17) compared to Congress (ratio of 1:2) or CPI (M) (ratio of 1: 2)[3]. Congress accepted against BJP in the last election. So, a sharpened and generalized inference could be arrived at if the victory margins of Muslim candidates in 15th Loksabha elections are calculated.

Table 2: Victory margins for losing and winning candidates in 16th Loksabha election

Victory Margin	Where both winner and runner-up is a Muslim Candidate	Where the winner is Muslim candidate against a candidate from another community	Where the runner-up is Muslim candidate against a candidate from another community	Total
1% and less	1	0	5	**6**
More than 2 to 5%	1	3	3	**7**
More than 5 to 10%	1	2	10	**13**
More than 10 to 15%	2	1	7	**10**
More than 15 to 20%	2	2	5	**9**
More than 20%	2	1	7	**10**
Total	**9**	**9**	**37**	**55**

Note: Margin of votes has been calculated as the ratio of the difference in votes between the winner and the runner up to the total number of votes cast in the parliament constituency.

Source: Calculated by author based on Election data.

Political Representation of Minorities in Karnataka Assembly

Similar to the analysis undertaken for Parliament in the earlier section, we are analyzing 21 assembly seats where minority candidates have either won or been runner-up. Similar to the changes that occurred at national level, in the state of Karnataka too, seismic level changes have taken place in the political representation of minorities. Singh and Shastri (2014) argued that Karnataka moved away from a 'stable multi-party convergence' category to bi-polar

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[3] Beyond these quantitative figures, there is a need to undertake qualitative assessment as to whether election manifestos of political parties are reflecting the logic of minority representation in their stated promises to electorates. Similarly, parliamentary and assembly debates could be studied to observed how much time has been spent on debating minority issues.

competition since the election of 2008. Therefore, it is worth studying the nature of changes in political representation for minorities in recent times.

Similar to the analysis done in the previous section on Parliamentary election data, we are undertaking similar analysis on Karnataka assembly election of 2013. The voter turnout in the election was 70.23. When we examine the voter turnout in the assembly Constituencies where minority candidates were either winners or runner-up, the per cent is much below the state level voter turnout. As appendix 1 shows, in three assembly constituencies where both the winner and runner-up was Muslim, the average voter turnout was just 54%[4]. In other constituencies where either the winner or runner-up was Muslim candidate, the average voter turnout was 64%. These lower turn outs could possibly be explained by apathy that other community members take when it comes to the question of political representation of their interest by members belonging to a different community.

Table 3: Victory margins for losing and winning candidates in assembly election of Karnataka, 2013

Victory Margin	Where both winner and runner-up is a Muslim Candidate	Where the winner is Muslim candidate against a candidate from another community	Where the runner-up is Muslim candidate against a candidate from another community	**Total**
1% and less	0	1	0	**1**
More than 2 to 5%	0	2	2	**4**
More than 5 to 10%	1	1	3	**5**
More than 10 to 15%	0	0	1	**1**
More than 15 to 20%	1	3	0	**4**
More than 20%	1	3	2	**6**
Total	3	10	8	21

Note: Margin of votes has been calculated as the ratio of the difference in votes between the winner and the runner up to the total number of votes cast in the assembly constituency.

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[4] It is interesting to note the particularly very low voter turnout in the assembly constituency of K. J. George (50%), Qamar Ul Islam (50%), Tanveer Sait (54%) and Roshan Baig (54%) who hold ministerial level portfolios in the government. Similarly, U. T. Khader (74%) gaining voter turnout above state average is also noteworthy.

However, this is not conclusive. A socio-economic explanation could be that, in regions where Muslims are high in number, poverty may be at a higher level, and migration may be necessary. Thus, the voters may not be casting the votes since they are away from the constituency. This technical explanation may not be substantiated with data.

The victory margin of candidates presented in table 3 is close to that of parliamentary election, though the number of minority members have won more, because of the victory of Congress, and thus more minority candidates being represented in the assembly. The data presented above indicates that though the Constitution has protected minority interests, similar checks and balance are not observable in the electoral process.

These divergent patterns (both at the state level and national level) could not be merely explained by the *locus* of its operation. Rather, the pattern would be clear only when "political is concerned with the distribution, exercise and consequences of power" (Hay 2002: 3).

Assadi (2002) has shown that implementation of land reforms in coastal Karnataka has elicited competitive merchant capitalism from various social groups. He provides the examples of Billavas, a toddy tapper community which transformed its identity into traders, businessmen, hoteliers etc. Other trading communities in the region also include important Muslim communities of Navayathi and Baerys. The competition between these trading communities has been shaped by the way broader inter-community coalitions take place. "Identity-based political forces vary in the extent to which they aim to promote cultural change. They may be divided into two ideal types: first, those which instrumentally deploy culture to help build broad social coalitions and gain access to resources and power; and second, those which prioritise cultural change, sacrificing some support, resources and power if necessary to promote the norms they value" (Subramanian 2005: 3823).

Alternatives to Democratic Representation of Minorities

What is emerging throughout the world is disenchantment with democracy. The form of democracy has gone against the essence of democracy. While some have interpreted this trend as the resurgence of traditional values (including religion) in society, others are deliberating creative ways to deepen democracy. There is a deep search in each of the nation-states as to how the modernity could be saved without throwing away it with democracy. There may not be a quick fix to this. The underlying cause to this degeneration of democracy has been identified. That is, how democracy is entangled itself with capitalist forces. In other words, how the principle of 'one-vote, one person' is disturbed by the excessive play of money. In the context of the spread of neo-liberal values across the world, this connection has become more entrenched.

"India had a strong society that prevented a strong state from emerging in the first place" (Fukuyama 2011: 175). Religions and caste were the central forces of this strong society. This character did not change even after independence. Rather, economic processes facilitated by the state (both as an strong interventionist state immediately after independence and as withdrawn state in recent times) inevitably had to be populist in nature because of the challenge of socio-economic development. This systematically segmented the response from the political class to different political constituents. Thus, the very logic of political economy of democracy failed to integrate minority communities in the public sphere. It is this systemic failure and weakness of political structure that demands the search for alternatives.

There are three alternatives which need to be considered. First alternative is strengthening constitutional democracy, rather than aggregative democracy. Constitutional democracy as an idea relies upon the rules of the game, and insists on playing those games strictly adhering the rules. Without adherence to

the Constitutionality, democracy could be a game in the hands of the powerful. This school of thought emphasizes how punitive measures need to adopted for those who are breaking the rules of the games. This approach primarily believes that democratic framework is compatible with constitutional framework. For instance, the question of proportional representation, if it is a genuine demand, the methods to adopt the same is by making necessary constitutional changes rather than resorting to identity politics. In most of the modern constitutions, money or capital forces are not given any overriding power, and citizen rights are indeed protected. Thus, the space of political rights and civil rights are maintained with its arms-length space. Thus, capitalism could not drive democracy, if Constitutional democracy is adhered to.

A second alternative is that of radical democracy. This school has very little respect for the Constitutional framework. Radical democracy essentially views that the formation of Constitution is unjust and biased against the marginalized and minority communities. Yet, they believe that democracy as a project could be strengthened by radicalizing the same. This school primarily emphasizes deliberative model of democracy over aggregative model of democracy (Young, 2000). In the aggregative model, the head-count is important. In the deliberative model, how the space for reasoned debate is created in public space through deepening of the democracy takes place. Here, the 'government by discussion' (Sen 2009) subdues the economic forces, and thus, capitalism cannot have its final say on polity. As Kothari (2001) argues, aggregate democracies lead "to a politics of postures instead of a politics of performance – in reality, a politics of deceit – forcing to take recourse to authoritarian shortcuts and when this does not work, to the sheer politics of survival" (104-105). The route of radical democracy would require reforms within the religious communities to liberate them from the authoritarian forms. The present practice politics gaining power from financial capital (for instance

to fund elections through unholy alliance with business communities) do not indicate a tendency for the practice of radical democracy through modes of participation.

A third approach sees social differences in the society as a resource itself to transform society through multi-cultural process. In this approach, space is given for economic processes to be led by capitalist forces. Simultaneously space is given for the identity-politics to unfold. Dani Rodrik (2016) who has examined the question of the future of liberal democracy in developing countries argues that the future for the polity in Global south is very unlikely to be like Global North. He points out that the drastic change brought to the production process through technology has forced 'pre-mature deindustrialisation'. This is true in India. That is, without going to the phase of industrialization, country has moved to a service led economy. The demand for the skilled-labour in technology-driven production process drives out the labour intensive production processes. Rodrik (2016) argues that "The resulting employment patterns are not particularly conducive to liberal politics. Elites can easily divide and rule by exploiting identity cleavages and the highly heterogenous economic interests of informal labour". Thus, a scenario of brokered power sharing on identity lines becomes inevitable.

Conclusion

The first part of the paper has shown how liberal democratic framework, primarily through aggregative democracy, may not be able to address the deprivation question of Muslim communities. This takes us to second alternative of Constitutional democracy. Most ideal situation for this is to demand for a proportional representation. Ambedkar had made this proposal (Ambedkar, 1947), and it looks in the current context, this demand would have very limited political currency. The third option of using social difference as a resource seems to be the most viable and healthy way forward. However, this is

a road less taken, and would require a process of dialogue with other communities, and political mediation.

Celebrating social difference is a difficult path in less informed democracy such as India. An informed electorate is mandatory. Without an informed electorate, respect for other social groups does not emerge, leading to the suspicion of other rather than celebration. Yet, this difficult path is worth taking, since this would provide an opportunity for the minority communities not to be isolated. Celebrating the difference also would enable Indian democracy to realise the goals of 'diversity' rather than minority vs majority conceptualisations.

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Appendix 1: Voting patterns in assembly constituencies of Karnataka where either winner or runner-up were Minority candidates

Constituency	Winner	Votes	Runner-up	Vote	Total vote cast	Size of electorate	Victory margin	Per cent of vote cast
Belgaum Uttar	FAIROZ NURUDDIN SAITH	45125	RENU SUHAS KILLEKAR	26915	115183	193980	15.80	59.37
Khanapur	ARVIND CHANDRAKANT PATIL	37055	RAFIQUE KHATALSAB KHANAPURI	20903	134890	185379	11.97	72.76
Bijapur City	MAKBUL S BAGAWAN	48615	BASANAGOUDA R PATIL	39235	119021	211756	7.88	56.20
Gulbarga Uttar	QAMAR UL ISLAM	50498	NASIR HUSSAIN USTAD	30377	104838	208698	19.19	50.23
Bidar	GURUPADAPPA NAGAMARPALLI	50718	RAHEEM KHAN	48147	112971	190262	2.27	59.37
Raichur	DR. SHIVARAJ PATIL S.	45263	SYED YASIN	37392	99286	184986	7.92	53.67
Gangawati	IQBAL ANSARI	60303	PARANNA ESHWARAPPA MUNAVALLI	30514	125343	170865	23.76	73.35
Bhatkal	ENAYATHULLAH SHABANDRI	27435	SHIVANAND N. NAIK	26657	134517	189664	0.57	70.92
Shiggaon	BASAVARAJ BOMMAI	73007	KHADRI SAYED AZIMPEER	63504	150102	188396	6.33	79.67
Vijayanagara	ANAND SINGH	69995	H.ABDUL WAHAB	39358	124713	171289	24.566	72.80853
Davanagere South	SHAMANUR SHIVASHANKARAPPA	66320	KAREKATTE SYED SAIFULLA	26162	120410	182370	33.35105	66.02511
Tumkur City	DR. RAFEEQ AHMED S	43681	G.B. JYOTHI GANESH	40073	138317	210384	2.608501	65.74502
Hebbal	R. JAGADEESH KUMAR	38162	C.K. ABDUL RAHMAN SHARIEF	33026	115540	210497	4.445214	54.88914
Sarvagnanagar	KELACHANDRA JOSEPH GEORGE	69673	PADMANABHA REDDY	46819	140672	280041	16.2463	50.23264
Shivajinagar	R.ROSHAN BAIG	49649	NIRMAL SURANA	28794	90895	167309	22.94406	54.32762
Shanti Nagar	N.A.HARIS	54342	K. VASUDEVA MURTHY	34155	103610	179461	19.48364	57.73399
Chamrajpet	B.Z.ZAMEER AHMED KHAN	56339	G.A.BAVA	26177	107679	183009	28.01103	58.83809
Mangalore City North	B.A.MOHIUDDIN BAVA	69897	KRISHNA.J.PALEMAR	64524	145853	204413	3.683846	71.35212
Mangalore City South	J.R.LOBO	67829	N. YOGISH BHAT	55554	132315	205065	9.277104	64.52344
Mangalore	U T KHADER	69450	CHANDRAHAS ULLAL	40339	124927	168319	23.30241	74.22038
Narasimharaja	TANVEER SAIT	38037	ABDUL MAJID K H	29667	115764	211635	7.230227	54.69984