

## **Jharkhand Sixth Assembly Election: BJP's Tribal Challenge Continues**

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### **Abstract**

This paper analyses the narratives and elements that ensured an emphatic win for the INDIA alliance, especially JMM, in the just-concluded Jharkhand Assembly election of 2024. It sheds light on BJP's persisting inability to penetrate Adivasi votes in Jharkhand, how women as a large, cohesive labharthi group shaped the result in favour of Hemant Soren, how the rise of Jairam Mahto and his party affected the results, who benefited from his rise and who lost the most, and simultaneously it touches on some other factors that shaped the outcome in favour of the INDIA alliance. It also briefly suggested a way forward and challenges for the NDA and INDIA alliance, especially in the seventh assembly election in 2029.

### **Introduction**

The Sixth Assembly election in Jharkhand concluded on November 23 with a surprising result for many who had predicted a close contest. In today's political system, it is challenging for any non-BJP government to retain power after a five-year term especially in Hindi heartlands. This is the first-time post 2014 in Hindi belt where a non-BJP party has retained its power. The JMM-led INDIA alliance achieved a dominant victory, securing 56 out of 81 seats—the highest tally for any alliance in Jharkhand's electoral history. Within the alliance, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) led the way by winning 34 largest numbers of seats in its electoral history of the 43 seats it contested. The Indian National Congress (INC) maintained its 2019 performance, winning 16 out of 30 seats, just one fewer than in the previous election when it contested 31. The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) performed remarkably well, winning 4 out of 6 seats, while the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation (CPI (ML) L) also made gains by winning 2 of the 4 seats it contested.

On the other hand, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) did not perform well, winning only 24 seats in total. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured 21 out of the 68 seats it contested, while the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) won just 1 out of 10 with lowest strike rate in its electoral history. The Janta Dal United (JD(U)) also won 1 of its 2 contested seats, and the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) (LJP(RV)) claimed victory in the only seat it contested. The Assembly election completely overturned the Lok Sabha outcome: 9 seats won by BJP out of 14. But none of the tribal seats. Meanwhile, the emergence of the Jharkhand Loktantrik Krantikari Morcha (JLKM), led

by Jairam Mahato, played a crucial role in influencing the outcome of several seats. Although the party won only one seat.

Jharkhand has a total of 81 assembly seats, divided into different categories: 28 seats are reserved for Scheduled Tribes (ST), 9 for Scheduled Castes (SC), and the remaining 44 are general seats. The state is organized into 24 districts and five divisions: Palamu, Kolhan, South Chotanagpur, North Chotanagpur, and Santhal Parganas. Palamu comprises 9 seats, Kolhan has 14, South Chotanagpur has 15, North Chotanagpur includes 25 seats, and Santhal Pargana has 18 seats.

### **Infiltration narrative and its limitations**

The NDA alliance's poor performance in Jharkhand could be mapped out through issues that dominated the state assembly election. The BJP started with a heavy focus on the issues of infiltration during its campaign, particularly in the Adivasi-dominated regions of Santhal Parganas and Kolhan, which together account for about 32 assembly seats. Santhal Pargana is one of Jharkhand's key divisions, with 18 assembly seats, making it crucial in state politics. It comprises six districts: Deoghar, Dumka, Godda, Jamtara, Pakur, and Sahibganj. The region has a significant tribal population, with the Santhals being the dominant Adivasi group—Hemant Soren himself belongs to this community. Additionally, this division shares its eastern border with West Bengal, where some districts have a substantial Muslim population.

Recognising the area's demographic composition, the BJP, led by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, attempted to employ a strategy similar to the one used in Assam. They pushed the narrative of Bangladeshi infiltration, aiming to polarise Adivasi voters against Muslims. This infiltration narrative was built on fear of Bangladeshis (de facto, they meant Muslims) coming and taking their land by marrying their daughters. Simultaneously, in several instances, popular leaders like Babulal Marandi, Amar Kumar Bauri, and many others raised concerns regarding the decreasing Adivasi population and increasing Muslim population in the state. PM Modi during his rally in Jharkhand says, '*Ye aapki roti chheen rahe hain, aapki beti bhi chheen rahe hain, aur ye aapki maati ko bhi hadap rahe hain*' (They are snatching your bread, they are taking away your daughters, they are usurping your land) (Mishra, 2024). The underlying goal was to shift Adivasi support away from their traditional allegiance to the JMM and towards the BJP. However, this strategy backfired, as the Santhal region was a traditional stronghold of the JMM. JMM Chief, Shibu Soren comes from Santhal tribe, dominant tribe in Santhal region. Since 1980, he has been Member of Parliament in the Lower house for almost 30 years from Dumka Lok Sabha constituency. Further, his son incumbent CM and de facto chief of JMM, contested the election from Barhait in Sahibganj district, a key part of Santhal Pargana and historically significant for the JMM since the days of Shibu Soren.

The BJP's infiltration narrative was built to target Santhal Pargana, especially its ST-reserved constituencies, where the party has historically struggled. From this narrative BJP was hoping to serve two central purposes: first, polarise Adivasis on the basis of losing population and Identity, which will make them shift from their traditional voting loyalty to JMM. It is important to note here that JMM has a very strong support base among Christian Adivasis who barely vote for BJP and, to an extent, Sarna Adivasis,

which JMM tried to mobilise them in its favour by raising the emotive issue of a separate Sarna Code. Christians constitute 4.3 % of the total population of Jharkhand<sup>1</sup>, and the majority are from the Adivasi community. So, more than 15% of the population among Adivasis could be practising Christianity, and they prefer JMM over BJP (Kumar, 2018). Similarly, in bordering districts, Pakur and Sahibganj, more than 30% of the population are Muslims<sup>2</sup>, which further compromises the winning chances of the BJP or its allies in the Santhal region.

The BJP's second objective with the infiltration narrative was to consolidate its core voter base, particularly those aligned with its Hindutva ideology. This was crucial for the party, especially since several key leaders had recently joined from other political parties. For instance, Babulal Marandi, the current head of the BJP in Jharkhand, was previously associated with the Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (JVM). Similarly, Champai Soren, major face for BJP in Jharkhand, was a few months back with JMM. But BJP's commitments to its core principles assured its loyal voters to stick behind it. Further, by emphasizing the infiltration issue, the BJP sought to reassure the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) of its commitment to Hindutva Ideology and its efforts to integrate Adivasis—referred to by the RSS as Vanvasi—into the larger Hindu fold. This strategy aimed to strengthen party unity and maintain ideological commitment, while also appealing to Adivasi voters on cultural and religious grounds. Christian Missionaries work among Adivasis has always not gone well with RSS and its political heir BJP<sup>3</sup>. RSS and its ideologues believed that Adivasis are being falsely lured into Christianity against their true faith of Hindu believers. In Jharkhand RSS has indulged itself through several social service activities which it performs in Adivasi areas (for example Adivasi Kalyan Ashram). Further, in July 2024 RSS held its three-day national level meeting in Ranchi Jharkhand just few months before the assembly election in the state. During the "*Adivasi Delisting Rally*" on December 24, 2023, BJP stalwart Kariya Munda and the RSS offshoot Janjaatiya Suraksha Manch (JSS) had argued against the reservation benefits for converted Adivasis. They hoped that this polarisation would further work among Adivasis practicing Christianity and Non-Christians, which would eventually help it consolidate a large number of Non-Christian Adivasi votes in its favour. In 2017, under the BJP government they even brought the Anti-Conversion Law which prohibited the conversion of Adivasis. Using all these antics, it has consistently attempted to mobilise Adivasis under the umbrella of Hinduism. Recent polarisation attempt in the name of Bangladeshi is continuation of its anti-minority policies in disguise. It has heavily relied on polarisation for success in Jharkhand where it has failed miserably.

Despite this grandeur of polarisation, BJP only managed to win one seat (Jarmundi, a general seat in Dumka district by Devendra Kunwar of BJP) out of 18 and none of the 7 ST reserve seats. Like the 2019 assembly election, they failed to win any reserve seats

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<sup>1</sup> More information can be found from the Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. 2011. Census of India 2011: Provisional population totals. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. <https://censusindia.gov.in/>;

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Press Trust of India, 'Christian missionaries threat to unity of country, control Congress: BJP MP', *Hindustan Times*, April 22, 2018, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/christian-missionaries-threat-to-unity-of-country-controlling-congress-bjp-mp/story-DsFY0Wylix2baxdG45GFJL.html>.

in Santhal Pargana area in 2024. This could be explained by the failure and ineffectiveness of the infiltration narrative that did not resemble different existing realities on the ground. Further, it could be interpreted as a BJP's attempt to make an inroad in arduous political turf, in Santhal Parganas it lacks any big face from the community, unlike JMM's major face of Hemant Soren.

The infiltration of the foreigner narrative was the first of its kind ever used in state politics. Despite border control being a central government responsibility, BJP attempted to push the blame on the Hemant government. This intentional push of national issues into state politics is not odd with BJP's larger political ambition. BJP has clearly consolidated itself as a nationalist party committed in service of the nation. Even it matches with its language of homogeneity politics, where it believes in mainstreaming the sidelined (for example Adivasis/Vanvasis-backward hindus). Idea of fear and security is very central in the language of politics BJP employs to reach out to its voters and followers. This has been the case in at least bordering states where security has been a successful narrative in elections (for example North Eastern states and Arunachal Pradesh being prominent). BJP was hoping to reap the similar benefits from raising the fear among the Adivasis and mobilising them in its favour. There had been multiple pushes by its major leaders like Babulal Marandi, Amar Kumar Bauri, Himanta Biswa Sarma and many others who continuously alarmed the shrinking population of Adivasis and increasing population of muslim in Santhal Pargana and broadly to the whole state. But all these mainstreaming and fearmongering failed to convince the Adivasis to vote in its favour.

Kolhan has proven to be a similar enigma for the BJP. Kolhan region was an interesting battle because of the departure of Champai from JMM and its subsequent effects. Kolhan, which has a large number of Tribal populations, comprises three districts: East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum and Seraikella Kharsawan. Kolhan region comprises 14 assembly seats, out of which 11 were won by the INDIA alliance and only three seats by NDA. Here, 9 seats are reserved for STs, of which BJP managed to win just 1 seat, which itself opened its account from 0 in 2019. This one seat was won by former CM and JMM turncoat Champai Soren. He won in his traditional bastion Seraikella seat. This is the first time for BJP which has won any ST reserved seat in this region after the 2009 assembly election. In 2009, the party won 5 out of the 9 Scheduled Tribe (ST) reserved seats in the Kolhan region, securing victories in all three districts of the division—East Singhbhum, West Singhbhum, and Seraikella Kharsawan. Statewide, it managed to win 9 out of the total 28 ST-reserved seats that year<sup>4</sup>. To mobilise Adivasi voters in Kolhan, the BJP strategically brought Champai Soren into its fold, hoping his influence would sway the tribal electorate. Additionally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made two visits to the region in 2024 to launch several Adivasi-specific schemes, and Home Minister Amit Shah held a *Vijay Sankalp Rally* there in 2023. Despite these efforts, the BJP could not halt the momentum of the JMM-led INDIA alliance. The INDIA alliance maintained its stronghold by winning 11 out of 14 seats in Kolhan—the same number as in 2019. However, this time, they secured

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<sup>4</sup> For details on the result, see Election Commission of India. 2009. General Election to Legislative Assembly of Jharkhand 2009: Schedule amendment regarding. <https://hindi.eci.gov.in/files/file/2034-general-election-to-legislative-assembly-of-jharkhand-2009-schedule-amendment-regarding>.

8 of the 9 ST-reserved seats, slightly fewer than the complete sweep of all 9 reserved seats they achieved in the previous election.

### **BJP's inability to mobilise Adivasis**

BJP has faced a huge challenge in making inroads with Adivasi voters in Jharkhand, which could be attributed to many factors, first could be the nature of politics; it stands for Hindutva social order and Neoliberal economic structure. In Jharkhand according to the 2011 census<sup>5</sup> 12.52 % of the population follows the Sarna while 4.3 % practice Christianity. These two communities constitute a large chunk of tribal population in Jharkhand. These could be close to 60% of the tribal population in Jharkhand. Even Tribes enumerated practicing Hinduism often to take the state benefits identified on paper as Hindu but in practice they practice their own traditional religion like Sarna. All these Adivasis are still uncomfortable with Hindutva politics of BJP.

Adivasis are known to have resided in deep forest natural rich areas (such as Jharkhand), and therefore, fought against any onslaught and exploitation of these resources. It is found that Adivasi are most marginalized among all communities after displacement and they constitute around 40% of displacement induced in the name of development (Varughese & Mukherjee, 2024). Neoliberal induce large scale displacement and counter protest from the community further alienated the Adivasis from BJP. During the Raghubar Das-led BJP rule in 2017, the government attempted to amend the Chotanagpur Tenancy (CNT) Act and the Santhal Pargana Tenancy (SPT) Act, which were enacted during colonial rule to protect the land rights of Adivasis in Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana. Furthermore, BJP has consistently failed to project itself as a party of Adivasis, in fourth assembly election 2014 when it secured a clear majority it nominated Raghubar Das, a non-Tribal, as a CM for the first time in Jharkhand's history. Even it has failed to exploit the narrative JMM as a party of Santhals and mobilize non-Santhali Adivasis in its favour. This could be again attributed to a large number of people from major tribes for instance Munda and Oraon (more than 25% practices Christianity) practices Christianity and Sarna religion. Since 2014, when it was able to win 11 of the 28 ST reserve seats, it has slumped to just 2 in 2019, and now it has further gone to just one seat. Which was itself won by erstwhile JMM face Champai Soren. Furthermore, the BJP has failed to check the growth of the JMM in non-Santhali Adivasi-dominated areas. South Chotanagpur, which is also known as the Ranchi division and comprises five districts, namely Gumla, Khunti, Lohardaga, Ranchi, and Simdega in alphabetical order, is dominated by the Oraon and Munda communities, but the BJP failed to convince them to vote in its favour. Similarly, in the Kolhan division, which comprises three districts, East Singhbhum, Seraikela Kharsawan, and West Singhbhum, dominated by the Ho community, it only won just one seat, which was zero in 2019, and that was won by a former JMM leader, Champai Soren. A similar fate BJP faced in the Lok Sabha election as well, when it failed to win any of the 5 ST reserve seats in Jharkhand. In Jharkhand, there are at least 21 districts of a total of 24, where the Adivasi population constitutes 1 lakh population. Moreover, there are 43 assembly seats where Adivasis are at least 20% of the

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<sup>5</sup> For complete details, visit Census 2011, Government of India. <http://censusindia.gov.in>;

population. Despite a major push and projecting Babulal Marandi (Adivasi himself) as the face of the BJP in the state, BJP has failed to win support among Adivasis in its favour, which has cost it dearly in the just concluded sixth assembly election.

North Chotanagpur has the highest number of assembly seats for any division in Jharkhand state. It has 25 seats and constitutes 7 districts, Bokaro, Chatra, Dhanbad, Giridih, Hazaribagh, Koderma and Ramgarh. In North Chotanagpur, it is the only division where NDA secured more seats than its rival INDIA alliance. In the 2019 assembly election NDA had won 12 seats which saw an increase of just one seat to 13 in 2024. The INDIA alliance won 11 seats in 2019 which went down by one seat to 10 this election. The concluded 6th assembly election saw an interesting development which was more or less centred in North Chotanagpur region. The rise of Jairam Mahto and his party Jharkhand Loktantrik Krantikari Morcha (JLKM), it contested 71 seats and managed to win just one seat, but this should not be read plainly because, in at least 14 seats, they managed to secure more votes than the winning difference of the candidates. It is important to note here that All Jharkhand Student Union (AJSU), an NDA ally, had the same vote base as JLKM i.e, Kudmi Mahato. Jairam himself comes from the Mahto community like Sudesh Mahto, AJSU chief. Kudmi-Mahto is believed to constitute almost 15% of the state population and they dominate the North Chotanagpur division. This community indirectly influences at least 32-35 assembly seats in the state. In 7 seats, Kudmi Mahto has more than 70% of the population. It could be argued that the rise of JLKM in this election hurt the NDA more than the INDIA alliance. For example, in the popular seat of Chandankiyari, Amar Kumar Bauri (leader of the opposition) finished third behind the JLKM candidate, Arjun Rajwar, who managed to secure more than 56 thousand votes, and the seat was won by JMM. Similarly, Sudesh Mahto lost his old seat, Silli, to JMM's Amit Mahto, while the JLKM candidate came third with almost 42 thousand secured in its favour. Jairam also goes beyond mere caste identity; he is popular in Jharkhand, especially among the youths (students), for his radical politics. Traditionally, AJSU was also a student (youth) based party. The emergence of Jairam could be seen as the emergence of a new Kudmi-Mahto and student politics face in Jharkhand. And this rings an alarm bell for AJSU, it will be interesting to see how AJSU wraps around this new political development. The Palamu division comprises three districts: Palamu, Garwah and Latehar. All these districts have a total of 9 Assembly seats. In those nine seats, the INDIA alliance secured victory in 5 seats, and four seats went to NDA.

South Chotanagpur has 15 assembly seats and comprises 5 districts Gumla, Khunti, Lohardaga, Ranchi and Simdega. South Chotanagpur has the largest reserved seats for STs in Jharkhand, and this area also comprises the birthplace of Adivasi icon Birsa Munda. Furthermore, Adivasi of this region are politically active and have seen movements like Pathalgarhi during Raghubar Das led BJP ruled government. These movements were often against the state who had displaced and marginalised them in the name of development. Adding all the discontentment of Adivasis with the BJP further shrank their performance to 2 seats compared to 6 in 2019. On the other hand, the INDIA alliance gained significantly here from 8 in 2019 to 13 seats this year.

### **Women voters as ‘Labharthi’ and competitive welfare politics in Jharkhand**

As in many recent elections across the country, women voters were a central focus in the just-concluded Jharkhand assembly election. The state has a total of 2.59 crore voters, with 1.28 crore women. In at least 32 constituencies, women voters outnumbered men, and of these, 26 are in ST-reserved seats. Notably, Adivasi women in Jharkhand tend to have higher voting rate than Adivasi men. In the recent Lok Sabha election held in April-June 2024, voter turnout among women was higher than that of men in Jharkhand. Recognizing the importance of women voters, the JMM launched the *Maiyya Samman Yojana*, under which the state government provides Rs 1,000 per month to women aged 18 to 50. Hemant Soren promised that this amount would eventually rise to Rs 2,500 per month. However, the BJP also had a similar policy, introducing the *Gogo Didi Yojana*, which promised Rs 2,100 per month if they came to power. Despite this, Hemant Soren's strategic move of launching the *Maiyya Samman Yojana* just before the election and disbursing 3 to 4 installments to women gave the JMM a significant advantage. This initiative particularly resonated with women voters in Adivasi areas, securing a substantial number of votes for the JMM and giving the party a strong edge in the election.

Further, cash handouts to women make them trumps beyond their immediate caste, religious and other identities and vote on the basis of economic consideration (Hankla et al. 2022) and under these labharthi schemes, women constitute a large chunk of cohesive voters that affects the election outcome. And it would not be wrong to argue this has further compromised the NDA's (BJP) chance of winning seats in especially Adivasi areas where it has managed to win just one and, in general, same in the whole state. Further, JMM has its own popular women's face, Kalpana Soren, unlike BJP. It is safe to say that she is the most popular female leader in the state, even INDIA allies were asking her to campaign for them. Capitalising on this popularity of Kalpana, JMM has successfully used it in her outreach to women voters, especially Adivasis women. And that seems to have paid very well for JMM and other INDIA allies.

Additionally, in Jharkhand, a large portion of the population is receiving some kind of welfare benefits from the state government. The Hemant government hands out Rs 1000 in five different schemes, namely, Old Age pension, Disability pension, Destitute Women pension, HIV-AIDS patient and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) pensions. These welfare schemes benefit at least 40 lakhs labharthi, which is almost 10% of the state population. It is important to note here that some of the schemes under which the central government pays certain cash, such as Rs 500 for Disability pension, but Hemant has raised it to Rs 1000 and used it as his scheme. Hemant's strategic creation of a large number of labharthi in Jharkhand helped him fight anti-incumbency and retain his power in an emphatic fashion.

There is a large trend shift in the nature of politics in India, the over reliance on welfare policies to win the election (Aiyar 2023). This welfarist shift is a direct approach to reach the people normally staying outside the civic benefits and living a humble life. This populist method is the direct relation of the leader to its subject. Since this approach proved successful, it has no singular party to identify with. Today, we are living in a competitive populist welfare state, where one party is trying to out compete

the other by offering more welfare benefits. Jharkhand had a similar story especially when it came to pleasing women voters. JMM had *Maiyya Samman Yojana*, where they promised to pay Rs 1000 per month, while BJP proposed *Gogo Didi Yojna*, where they offered Rs 2100 to women from age group 18 to 60 years old that eventually led JMM to promise its increase in benefits to Rs 2500 per month. All these direct benefits helped Hemant fight anti-incumbency and retain power. Similar phenomena happened in Maharashtra, where the ruling alliance offered a set of welfare benefits that helped them secure landslide victory. This welfarist shift is expected to remain an integral part of Indian politics; its glimpse could be seen in the upcoming Delhi Assembly election in 2025. In the past, Mamta Banerjee's West Bengal, Shivaraj Singh Chouhan's Madhya Pradesh and Nitish Kumar's Bihar are prominent examples. These leaders have consistently projected themselves as simple and committed to the welfare of women as the main political goal of their government.

### **Narratives of corruption and attacks on Adivasi identity**

The BJP has used the corruption narrative as a major political campaign tool to sway the voters against the incumbent Hemant government. They highlighted Soren's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and his subsequent jail term. Further, the BJP had used ED aggressively in Jharkhand to weaken the Congress, with several leaders facing corruption charges and arrests. However, the corruption narrative against Hemant has not been historically very successful. He had faced corruption charges in 2021 and 2022, but these did not dent his popularity among his supporters. Further, the corruption narrative has its own limitations when it comes to JMM. Hemant Soren has used this narrative as an attack on Adivasi identity and pride, and serving in jail further consolidated common Adivasis in his favour and allowed him to garner huge sympathy. He won his traditional seat Barhait with a record margin of more than 39 thousand, the biggest victory margin at constituency level since the formation of Jharkhand for Hemant Soren individually. If this were Congress, then the BJP would have stronger chances of convincing voters to vote in its favour, and even its appeasement narrative could have been in use. The bipolar contest of Congress versus BJP: in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, Congress had only a strike rate of 8%, and with improved performance in 2024, it went up to 29%, which is still very one-sided for BJP. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress has won in 83 seats (strike rate: 29%), while the Bharatiya Janata Party has won in 180 seats (strike rate: 62.9%) where the two parties are directly competing<sup>6</sup>. This trend is also equally valid at assembly levels since Narendra Modi became Prime Minister of the country. But in certain southern states, the Congress has performed well in polls. It triumphed over the BRS in Telangana and the BJP in Karnataka. In Kerala, the UDF, led by the Congress, won 18 of 20 seats in the summer Lok Sabha election (Chatterji 2024). However, the decision of Congress to fight as a second party and alliance partner to JMM helped the alliance remain in power. JMM

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<sup>6</sup> The Hindu Data Team, 'Election results 2024: In direct contests, Congress strike rate against BJP rises to 29% in 2024 from 8% in 2019', *The Hindu*, 5 June, 2024, <https://www.thehindu.com/data/election-results-2024-in-direct-contests-congress-win-rate-against-bjp-rises-to-29-in-2024-from-8-in-2019/article68229686.ece>.



has, from the start, successfully projected itself as a sole party of Adivasis and committed to their welfare and upliftment, and in this, it really paid well for them.

### Conclusion

The outcome of the sixth Jharkhand assembly election marks a significant political moment in the post-2014 Indian political system, where the JMM-led INDIA alliance has steered to victory in 56 out of 81 seats—the highest tally for any alliance in the state's history—despite the BJP's aggressive campaigns on Hindutva, corruption, and infiltration narratives. In the present BJP-dominated political system, even returning to power at the assembly level, especially in the Hindi belt, is exceptionally rare. The JMM-led INDIA alliance has done it emphatically in the 2024 Assembly Elections. This dominant victory was surprising to many, even to those who expected it to win.

The infiltration narrative was pushed heavily by the BJP to polarize the Adivasis, but to no avail. Similarly, a corruption narrative was used against Hemant Soren even though he was arrested on these charges, but all these manoeuvres did not tarnish his image. Some would argue that BJP did its own goal by arresting Hemant Soren; first, it allowed him to gain sympathy, and second, a major blow to BJP happened with the introduction of Kalpana Soren, wife of Hemant Soren. It is safe to say she is the undisputed major face of women leaders in Jharkhand; even the famous *Maiyan* scheme was spearheaded by her. BJP had no such leaders to rely on. This election again reaffirms the BJP's slumping performance among the Adivasis of Jharkhand. In the post-2014 political system, BJP has consistently failed to sway Jharkhandi Adivasis in its favour. Similarly, its ally AJSU faces an existential crisis with the emergence of JLKM, which has similar vote bases among the Kurmi-Mahato community.

In post 2024 Jharkhand Assembly elections, the BJP and its ally AJSU face a new challenge, and it will be interesting to see how they navigate this in the upcoming seventh assembly election. Congress should also play a more active role, as it currently has the lowest strike rate among the INDIA allies. JMM, while still the dominant force for Adivasis in Jharkhand, may face a crisis if it continues to overlook other Adivasi groups, such as the Oraon and Mundas, in key party roles. However, for now, JMM remains the central political force representing Adivasis in the state. And it would not be wrong to argue that JMM and Hemant Soren are the main political party and leader, respectively, representing the Adivasi voice at the national level.

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