

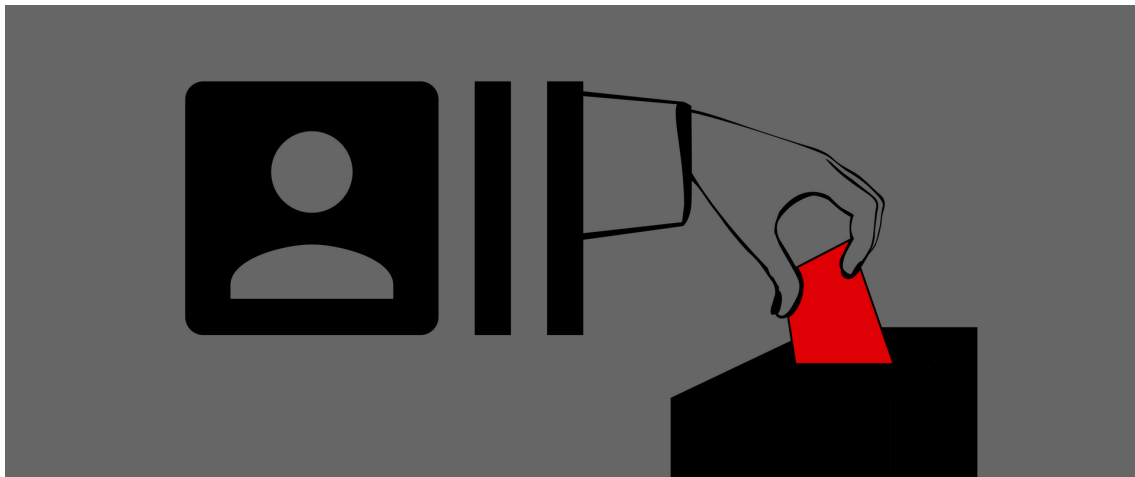
Electoral Exclusion of Muslims Continues to Plague Indian Democracy

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This analysis of electoral data from the Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer's website and the single-person household estimates from the Centre for Research and Debates in Development Policy, New Delhi shows that nearly one quarter of Muslim adults in Karnataka were out of the electoral rolls. Overall, about 15% of all adults were not listed in the voter lists in Karnataka. Evidence of non-listing of Muslim electorate in large proportions is found in other states as well. The lack of consistent efforts to enroll all eligible adults by the electoral institutional structures enables political parties to achieve undemocratic and unethical goals.

The Sachar Committee Report (GoI 2006) was probably the most widely discussed and debated government-sponsored fact-finding report of 21st century India. Its uniqueness was that it studied and analysed the largest religious minority, Muslims, in comparison with other socio-religious groups. The condition of Muslims was said to be deteriorating to the levels of the Scheduled Caste (SC) community that had been historically oppressed; in a few cases, the outcome indicators were lower than those of this comparative group. The report highlighted the path through which the relative deprivation of the Muslims was deepening,

and it pointed towards a systemic bias against them that existed in governance, in economic, social, and political (discourses) institutions, as well as in day-to-day decision-making.

Yet, there was consolation in the belief that democratically established institutions, special purpose institutions, regulatory mechanisms, private sector, and civil society organisations function on the principle of equality and equal access. Therefore, public confidence in such institutions was higher than in purely government and political organisations. However, this article suggests that most of such extra-government institutions also behave as if they are extended departments of the government structure and carry similar, if not the same, levels of institutional biases against the minorities, especially Muslims, in India.

It is no wonder then that deprivation in the parameters defining human development—such as in literacy, dropout rates, malnutrition, immunisation, development credit, organised sector employment, gender empowerment and even access to many publicly provided welfare and income-augmenting programmes and schemes—is high among Muslims. For example, Muslims have the least access to development credit (Shariff 2016) and they do not even show up in the national rural employment schemes (GoI 2006: 123-36). They face extraordinary hurdles in accessing targeted welfare benefits as they are often asked to provide a “minority certificate” which does not exist in the administrative system anywhere in India.^[1] Shariff (2016) discusses such situations under which the Muslims in India survive and prosper.

Structure of Political Disempowerment

India often claims to be world’s largest democracy, and rightly so. Imagine over two-thirds of India’s 1.3 billion population exercising franchise in every nook and corner of the country. It is commended and even treated as a national feat.

Yet, the empirical analysis presented in this article brings to light a dimension which has hitherto only been vaguely suspected. It is likely that over 15% of all adults are either left out or excluded from voting lists in India. There is a strong empirical indication, as described below, that this percentage is much higher among Muslims.

It is no secret that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has an aggressive anti-Muslim stance. The culmination of such an ideology is the party’s policy of not fielding Muslim candidates in the assembly and the Lok Sabha elections. The BJP did not field any Muslim candidates in the recently concluded assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and the North East (Rehman 2018). The data generated from the electoral records suggests that the lack of consistent efforts to enroll all eligible adults by the electoral institutional structures enables political parties to achieve undemocratic and unethical goals.

Indeed, it is a surprise to find that a slow but steady process is ongoing through which the

minorities are being disenfranchised and politically excluded. The empirical and evidence-based research methodology used in this article suggests that a substantially large number (over one-third, often up to half) of them do not vote due to not being listed in appropriate voter lists at the level of the constituencies. This is not to speak only of voters in Assam as compared to those in Karnataka, but similar indicative evidence has emerged from Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh.

Understandably, similar exclusion may also be faced by other communities, especially the lower caste Hindus. However, isolating electoral enrollment data according to castes and sub-castes of Hindus is next to impossible; notwithstanding the recent caste census that was undertaken, but after which, data was never released. Yet, as a comparison group, it was possible to estimate excluded shares of adults for a group “other than Muslims” or the “All Others” category. This latter group consists of all Hindus, including the SCs, Scheduled Tribes (STs), and other minorities, who have a small share in the population.

Methods and Material—Data Mining, Collation and Analysis

The Centre for Research and Debates in Development Policy (CRDDP), a New Delhi-based policy institution with expertise in empirical data analytics, explored the website^[2] of the Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka state to find out data availability with respect to the voters. The CRDDP used the data mining protocols to access and extract the publicly available resources for all 224 legislative constituencies in Karnataka and create separate data files.^[3] This task was pursued mainly in the context of assembly elections in Karnataka scheduled in May 2018. Using the data mining protocols, it was possible to extract the name, age, house number and address, all tagged on with the voters’ booth-level identity in a manner that it was possible to visit, meet, and directly interact with the actual individuals whose names were missing from the voter list.

The procedures used were labour-intensive and often meticulous matching of individual cases was necessary. Identification of households was made possible by the cost-effective access to and transformation of electoral records through IT (information technology) programs (conversion from image to text format, translation from Kannada to English, programs to identify location based on voter and guardian names). The data uploaded on the Chief Electoral Officer’s website in February 2018 was not in usable format. Advanced programming was required to convert data from PDF to Word and Excel formats. Besides, all written matter was found to be in Kannada and had to be programmed and converted to English in a readable format.

This large amount of data pertains to over 50 million voters residing in about 56,696 voting booth—defined localities, 224 constituencies, and 30 districts of Karnataka. Data was converted into text files and cleaned before creating a separate database. It was further translated through special programs to identify and create exclusive data files consisting of

households wherein the fathers' names were matched with those of the sons and daughters. When a voter and his/her father had a (unique) Muslim name, they were categorised as Muslims, or else they were grouped in another category labelled as "All Others." Due to unique names that Muslims generally have, it was easy to use the above-stated methodology and isolate households with missing voters^[4] into two categories of "Muslims" and "All Others." The objective of this exercise was to find out systematic differentials, if any, between these two groups with respect to the share of adults who did not find a place in the voter list.

An unusually large number (estimated 1.2 million or more, see below) of Muslim adults' names were not in the voter list in Karnataka as of March 2018. The list was last updated in February 2018. Surely, over 1.2 million Muslim adults in Karnataka would not have been able to vote during the assembly elections which recently concluded in May 2018. About 12% of all other adults in Karnataka would not have been able to vote as well.

Analysis of Electoral Data Extracted from the Website of the Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka

From the exclusive data generated using the electoral listing; it was possible to isolate single-person voter households. The single-person voter households constituted 40%-50% of all households. Such households contained at least one registered voter, but one can easily imagine that one or more adults from these households would be unregistered eligible adults.

According to the Census of India 2011, only 4.7% of all households in Karnataka are single-person households and have one registered voter.^[5] The election office data was analysed using the 56,696 booth-level IDs in the state of Karnataka.^[6] Through the CRDDP's methodology, it is possible (in each booth) to identify households containing one or more adults who are not listed in the voter list. The criteria used shows high percentage of single-voter households. Usually, the definition of a household entails the presence of two adults who are married to each other. This suggests that most of the single-voter households identified from the electoral database must contain one or more other adults who have not been listed as voters in the booth-level voter list.

Data extracted from the above procedures for a sample of 25 constituencies of Karnataka^[7] is presented in Table 2 and Table 3. All the selected constituencies contain at least 10% of households belonging to the Muslim community.

The average of the excluded households for all the 25 constituencies has worked out to be 54.3% of Muslim Households (Table 1) whereas this percentage is 30.6% for the All Others category (Table 2). One can, therefore, find a difference of 24 percentage points between the voter-excluded households of Muslims and All Others. It is important to note that there

is some consistency in such differentials amongst all constituencies. For example, there is no constituency where the share of excluded voters for All Others category is higher than the comparative group of Muslims (Table 3).

Through this analysis, it is possible to conclude that the exclusion of Muslim voters from the voter list is disproportionately high and substantially higher than similar exclusion among the comparison group, All Others, in Karnataka.

All Households						Muslim Households				
S No	Name of Assembly Constituency	Total Households (HHs) (a)	Expected Single Person HHs* (b)	Actual Single Person HHs (c)	Additional Identified Single Voter HHs (d) = (c) - (b)	Muslim HHs (e)	Expected Single Person HHs * (f)	Actual Single Person HHs (g)	Additional Identified Single Voter HHs (h) = (g) - (f)	% Additional single Voter HHs to Total Muslim HHs (j) = (h)/(a) *(100)
1	Haveri	47,541	2,234	17,118	14,884	6,140	289	3,664	3,375	55.0
2	Nargund	44,520	2,092	15,672	13,580	5,215	245	3,078	2,833	54.3
3	Navalgund	63,555	2,987	26,159	23,172	8,042	378	5,196	4,818	59.9
4	Ron	52,259	2,456	19,744	17,288	6,001	282	3,664	3,382	56.4
5	Hadagali	41,075	1,931	16,726	14,795	4,368	205	2,792	2,587	59.2
6	Kundgol	38,166	1,794	13,426	11,632	5,209	245	2,971	2,726	52.3
7	Byadgi	51,606	2,425	16,678	14,253	6,526	307	3,543	3,236	49.6
8	Harapanahalli	49,654	2,334	16,657	14,323	6,614	311	3,656	3,345	50.6
9	Kittur	55,556	2,611	22,337	19,726	6,348	298	3,942	3,644	57.4
10	Ramdurg	56,941	2,676	26,407	23,731	7,455	350	5,035	4,685	62.8
11	Devara Hippargi	36,560	1,718	13,097	11,379	6,527	307	3,633	3,326	51.0
12	Mudhol	45,426	2,135	17,134	14,999	6,285	295	3,675	3,380	53.8
13	Devanahalli	52,928	2,488	17,617	15,129	5,488	258	3,007	2,749	50.1
14	Sakaleshpur	51,261	2,409	16,537	14,128	5,249	247	2,811	2,564	48.9
15	Basavana Bagevadi	26,779	1,259	11,099	9,840	4,250	200	2,583	2,383	56.1
16	Kampli	50,703	2,383	20,580	18,197	5,463	257	3,337	3,080	56.4
17	Bangarapet	49,672	2,335	17,364	15,029	6,806	320	3,709	3,389	49.8
18	Sringeri	51,534	2,422	16,529	14,107	5,591	263	2,915	2,652	47.4
19	Saundatti	58,311	2,741	23,346	20,605	6,891	324	4,104	3,780	54.9
20	Kushtagi	50,159	2,357	20,338	17,981	5,406	254	3,251	2,997	55.4
21	Karwar	57,719	2,713	27,948	25,235	5,942	279	4,042	3,763	63.3
22	Ranebennur	55,001	2,585	22,764	20,179	7,617	358	4,577	4,219	55.4
23	Hirekerur	42,261	1,986	14,179	12,193	6,012	283	3,125	2,842	47.3
24	Arsikere	55,880	2,626	17,437	14,811	5,929	279	2,980	2,701	45.6
25	Baindur	76,460	3,594	35,013	31,419	9,609	452	6,190	5,738	59.7
	TOTAL	1,261,527	59,292	481,906	422,614	154,983	7,284	91,480	84,196	54.3

Source: Website of the Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka.
* @ 4.7 % from Census 2011

Table 2: Identification of Households with One or More Unregistered All-Other Adults in Specified Constituencies in Karnataka (March 2018)

All Households						All Others				
SNo	Name of Assembly Constituency	Total Households (HHs) (a)	Expected Single Person HHs* (b)	Actual Single Person HHs (c)	Additional Identified Single Voter HHs (d) = (c) - (b)	All-Other HHs (e)	Expected Single Person HHs * (f)	Actual Single Person HHs (g)	Additional Identified Single Voter HHs (h) = (g) - (f)	% Additional single Voter HHs to Total All-Other (j) = (h)/(a) *(100)
1	Haveri	47,541	2,234	17,118	14,884	41,401	1,946	13,454	11,508	27.8
2	Nargund	44,520	2,092	15,672	13,580	39,305	1,847	12,594	10,747	27.3
3	Navalgund	63,555	2,987	26,159	23,172	55,513	2,609	20,963	18,354	33.1
4	Ron	52,259	2,456	19,744	17,288	46,258	2,174	16,080	13,906	30.1
5	Hadagali	41,075	1,931	16,726	14,795	36,707	1,725	13,934	12,209	33.3
6	Kundgol	38,166	1,794	13,426	11,632	32,957	1,549	10,455	8,906	27.0
7	Byadgi	51,606	2,425	16,678	14,253	45,080	2,119	13,135	11,016	24.4
8	Harapanahalli	49,654	2,334	16,657	14,323	43,040	2,023	13,001	10,978	25.5
9	Kittur	55,556	2,611	22,337	19,726	49,208	2,313	18,395	16,082	32.7
10	Ramdurg	56,941	2,676	26,407	23,731	49,486	2,326	21,372	19,046	38.5
11	Devara Hippargi	36,560	1,718	13,097	11,379	30,033	1,412	9,464	8,052	26.8
12	Mudhol	45,426	2,135	17,134	14,999	39,141	1,840	13,459	11,619	29.7
13	Devanahalli	52,928	2,488	17,617	15,129	47,440	2,230	14,610	12,380	26.1
14	Sakaleshpur	51,261	2,409	16,537	14,128	46,012	2,163	13,726	11,563	25.1
15	Basavana Bagevadi	26,779	1,259	11,099	9,840	22,529	1,059	8,516	7,457	33.1
16	Kampli	50,703	2,383	20,580	18,197	45,240	2,126	17,243	15,117	33.4
17	Bangarapet	49,672	2,335	17,364	15,029	42,866	2,015	13,655	11,640	27.2
18	Sringeri	51,534	2,422	16,529	14,107	45,943	2,159	13,614	11,455	24.9
19	Saundatti	58,311	2,741	23,346	20,605	51,420	2,417	19,242	16,825	32.7
20	Kushtagi	50,159	2,357	20,338	17,981	44,753	2,103	17,087	14,984	33.5
21	Karwar	57,719	2,713	27,948	25,235	51,777	2,434	23,906	21,472	41.5
22	Ranebennur	55,001	2,585	22,764	20,179	47,384	2,227	18,187	15,960	33.7
23	Hirekerur	42,261	1,986	14,179	12,193	36,249	1,704	11,054	9,350	25.8
24	Arsikere	55,880	2,626	17,437	14,811	49,951	2,348	14,457	12,109	24.2
25	Baindur	76,460	3,594	35,013	31,419	66,851	3,142	28,823	25,681	38.4
	TOTAL	1,261,527	59,292	481,906	422,614	1,106,544	52,008	390,426	338,418	30.6

Source: Website of the Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka.

* @ 4.7 % from Census 2011

Table 3: Differential Additional HHs with unregistered Adult between the Muslim and All Other Population Groups

S No	Name of Assembly Constituency	% Additional Muslim Voter HH (j) = (h)/(a) *(100)	% Additional All Others Voter HH (j) = (h)/(a) *(100)	Difference
1	Haveri	55.0	27.8	27.2
2	Nargund	54.3	27.3	27
3	Navalgund	59.9	33.1	26.8

4	Ron	56.4	30.1	26.3
5	Hadagali	59.2	33.3	25.9
6	Kundgol	52.3	27	25.3
7	Byadgi	49.6	24.4	25.2
8	Harapanahalli	50.6	25.5	25.1
9	Kittur	57.4	32.7	24.7
10	Ramdurg	62.8	38.5	24.3
11	Devara Hippargi	51.0	26.8	24.2
12	Mudhol	53.8	29.7	24.1
13	Devanahalli	50.1	26.1	24
14	Sakaleshpur	48.9	25.1	23.8
15	Basavana Bagevadi	56.1	33.1	23
16	Kampli	56.4	33.4	23
17	Bangarapet	49.8	27.2	22.6
18	Sringeri	47.4	24.9	22.5
19	Saundatti	54.9	32.7	22.2
20	Kushtagi	55.4	33.5	21.9
21	Karwar	63.3	41.5	21.8
22	Ranebennur	55.4	33.7	21.7
23	Hirekerur	47.3	25.8	21.5
24	Arsikere	45.6	24.2	21.4
25	Baindur	59.7	38.4	21.3
	TOTAL	54.3	30.6	23.7

Source: Website of the Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka.

Public Engagement

Keeping this data in mind, the first author of this article met with the secretary of the Minority Welfare Department, Government of Karnataka to find a possible recourse to the issue. However, the author was informed that often the Election Commission of India (ECI) rolls are complete and approximately equal to the total adults counted in a constituency in the census. Thus, the unregistered voters who were discovered by the CRDDP's empirical research did not exist in the documentation, records, and even minds, of the officials of the Commission.

Overall, the data suggests that there are 66 lakhs adults in Karnataka who live in clearly identifiable households. The CRDDP database has residential addresses of all such households where there is high likelihood of finding one or more unregistered adults. Such (non)-voters are physically identifiable as it is possible to identify their addresses. This fact has already been brought to the notice of the Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer and the ECI at New Delhi.^[8]

This scenario, therefore, leads to the following conclusions:

1. There is a possibility of wrong entries in Karnataka voter list which can be categorised as bogus and which can enable or even prompt political parties' wrongdoing.

2. The ECI must take an urgent note of these gross constitutional violations and launch corrective measures before the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Estimating Absolute Number of Adults Not Listed in the Voter List in Karnataka

Data in Tables 1 and 2 has been extracted and compiled by using the addresses found in the voter list on the electoral officer's website. This data relates to households in which one or more married couples and other adults live. In Karnataka, just about 70% of all households are one-couple households which can also be classified as nuclear families. Another 20% households can be categorised as joint households where two or more married couples live along with their children (possibly adults) and elders. About 10% of households do not contain married couples, but they can be adults.

However, to estimate the absolute number of adults not listed as voters, one must begin with the electoral office data on how many total voters are listed in the first place. A mass enrollment drive was held on 8 April 2018 and the online registrations were open till 14 April 2018. During this period, 12 lakh new voters were included in the voter list (*Times of India* 2018; *Hindu* 2018).

From the primary data for 221 constituencies, we can find a total of 66.2 lakh households in Karnataka which have one listed voter; of these, 13 lakh are Muslim households and the remaining 53.2 lakh belong to the All Others category. These absolute numbers are derived from the CRDDP's basic data files where only the total count can be achieved.

Using the absolute population data from the Chief Electoral Officer's office and the single-person household estimates from the CRDDP, estimation procedures have arrived at 20% unregistered voters among Muslims and 12.3% unregistered voters in the All Other category (Table 4).

	All Voters	Muslims	All Others
Chief Electoral Officer reported total voters (lakh) * (share of Muslims in Karnataka population is 13%)	498.0	64.7	433.3
CRDDP estimated net single person voter HHs with one or more un-registered adults living in them (lakhs)	66.2	13.0	53.2

CRDDP estimated net single person voter HHs as a percentage of total voters (%)	13.3 %	20.0 %	12.3 %
Source: Website of the Chief Electoral Officer, Karnataka. *The project population of Karnataka suggests an expected 46,727,912 adults over 18 years of ages in 2018. Thus, Election Office gives a number which is 31 lakh higher.			

Mission 2019

It is now time to launch “Mission 2019” in order to ensure that all adult citizens find their names listed in the respective booth-level voter lists. Since Muslims have a higher chance of being excluded from the electoral process, special drives must be launched in states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Assam, which have a large Muslim population. Besides the data for Karnataka provided above, the CRDDP has actual estimations for 30 constituencies in Telangana, 50 constituencies in Andhra Pradesh, and 183 constituencies in Gujarat. It also has access to similar data manually generated for selected districts of Uttar Pradesh during 2007. Table 5 contains sample data for two constituencies each from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.

Table 5: Identification of Households with one or more unregistered Muslim Adults two selected Constituencies each in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat

Name of the Constituency	Total House-holds	No of Muslim HHs	Possible Single Adult Person Muslim HHs (2011 Census)	Electoral Record based No of Muslim HHs with only one voter	Identified No. of Muslim HHs with one or more unregistered adults	% of Voters Excluded from Voter Lists
Telangana						
SIDDIPET	64,700	6,587	329	3,201	2,872	43.6
ARMUR	63,482	7,995	400	4,345	3,945	49.3
Andhra Pradesh						
VIJYAWADA WEST	56,255	10,991	500	6,127	5,577	50.7
KADAPA	57,489	19,917	996	7,272	6,276	31.5
Gujarat						
GODHRA	67,032	20,505	1,025	10,924	9,899	48.3
DHOLKA	59,719	12,796	640	6,695	6,055	47.3

Source: Websites of the Chief Electoral Officers of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Gujarat.^[9]

The malaise of exclusion of the Muslim electorate from voter lists appears to be existing in all states. This, therefore, is a challenge to the citizens of India that they participate in this mission 2019 and save democracy in the largest democracy of the world. Let myopic vision and procrastination of the government system and the election commission not disgrace the ethos and the sterling democratic principles of India.

End Notes:

[1] The first author Abusaleh Shariff's ongoing research in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal aims to find out the "pathways to link communities with governance." During his field work, several focus group discussions and local (village-)level meetings are held with the below poverty line (BPL) cardholder households. He notes that access to many welfare and income-generation programs is based on providing documents, including Aadhaar cards, BPL Cards, Income Certificate, and a minority certificate. There is no policy at the government levels to issue a minority certificate; yet such demands are made by the state-level bureaucracy.

[2] <http://ceo.karnataka.gov.in/RollSearch/>

[3] Data for two constituencies could not be accessed.

[4] This methodology can also be used to find out missing voters amongst other religious categories such as Hindus and Christians; but caste-based identification amongst the Hindus can generate erroneous results.

[5] As per "HH -1 Normal Households by Household Size (Census 2011)," <http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/hh-series/hh01.html>.

[6] An electoral booth is the last unit for which a voter list is prepared and arrangements are made so that voters visit this booth to cast their vote on the day of voting.

[7] It is a keen procedure through which constituency-wise data is extracted. It takes substantial time and money to extract, organise, and report this data. In Tables 2 and 3, data for only 25 constituencies out of 224 in Karnataka has been analysed. A sample of 11% is considered a good sample to understand the incidence of an event.

[8] For the first time in the history of assembly elections in Karnataka; after the data generated by the CRDDP became common knowledge, the Chief Electoral Officer scheduled a mass-voter enrollment drive and was able to get 1.2 million new registrations during the month of April 2018. Yet, about 5 million adults remain unregistered in Karnataka.

[9] Telangana: http://ceotserms1.telangana.gov.in/TS_Rolls/Rolls.aspx; Andhra Pradesh : http://ceoaperms1.ap.gov.in/Electoral_Rolls/Rolls.aspx; Gujarat: <http://erms.gujarat.gov.in/ceo-gujarat/master/frmEPDFRoll.aspx>.

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