A close-up photograph of an elephant's head, focusing on its eye and the surrounding wrinkled skin. The eye is a deep brown color with a black pupil, and the skin is dark grey with prominent, concentric wrinkles around the eye. The background is a continuation of the elephant's skin, showing more wrinkles and some lighter patches.

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CAPTIVE ELEPHANTS AND POLICY INTERVENTION PROJECT

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Elephants, owing to their size and majesty, have for the longest time inspired awe in the Indian population. The country follows an antiquated and contentious practice of keeping the majestic beings in captivity, in various capacities and for an array of motives, one of which is its usage in the temple industry. In India, elephants are mentioned under Schedule I of The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. This restricts the captivity of any elephant in India and is allowed only after a registration process with the state forest department. Despite stringent conditions, many elephants are illegally acquired, especially in religious institutions such as Temples and Mutts, in the name of their sacramental value. Shrine administrations believe in an elephant's sacramental value but the views of devotees vary across factors of education and age. The purpose of this project has been to assess the same. Due to resource, time and other restraints, we decided to limit our assessment to the State of Karnataka.

RESEARCH QUESTION

We went through a lot of literature reviews which made us cognizant about current state of captive elephants in under different conditions but we couldn't get a clear understanding of people and their religious viewpoint on elephants in temples. We therefore decided to study –

“HOW DOES PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT CAPTIVE TEMPLE ELEPHANTS VARY ACROSS FACTORS OF AGE AND EDUCATION?”

FIELD WORK

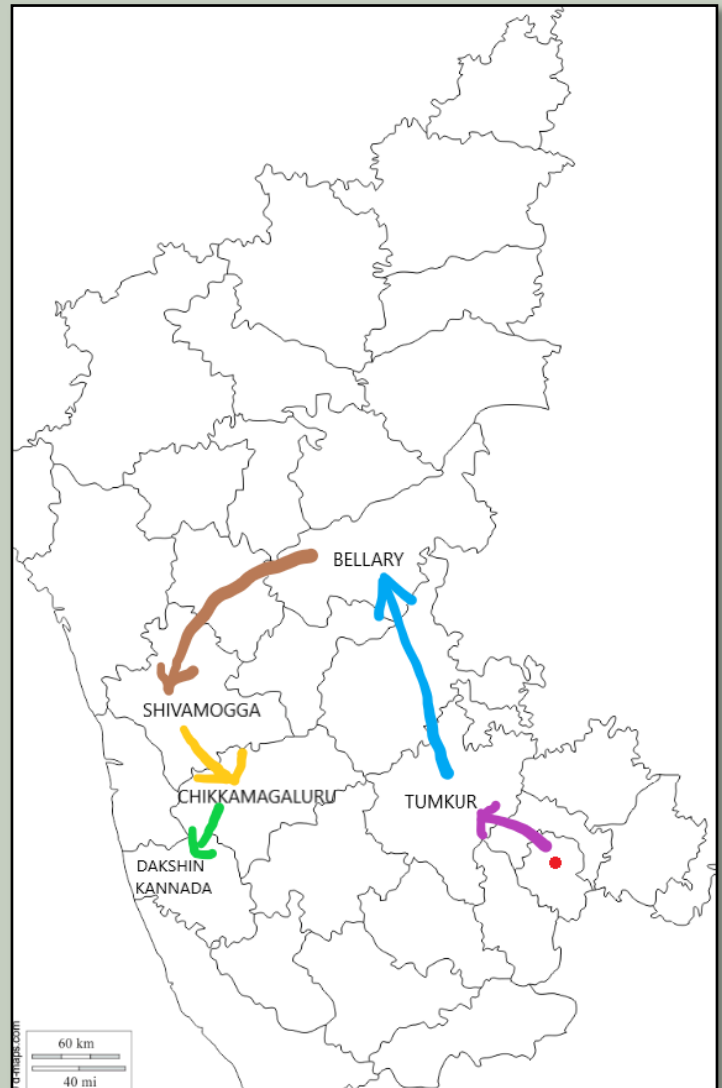
Prior to the field visit in November 2018, it was perceived by us that devotees visiting shrines with an elephant are deeply attached to the concept of an elephant's existence in shrines, especially those where such practice already exists. We met Mrs. Suparna Ganguly, President of a Bengaluru based NGO, Compassion Unlimited Plus Action (CUPA) in October 2018, which works majorly on the issue of captivity of elephants in India and which has also been litigating for this issue in the Supreme Court of India. Mrs. Ganguly briefed us about the case and shared her concerns regarding the entire process through which elephants are captivated in India. She also told informed us on how elephants are illegally trafficked around the country, especially from the north-eastern states and persons acquiring them either get the mandatory No-Objection Certificate from the concerned Forest Department through bribes, or do not get it at all. In fact, in its November 2018 hearing, The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India had to pass an Order for the "Re-registration" of all elephants of Karnataka within 30 days, including those without any registration at that time. For this purpose, the Hon'ble court unfortunately did not include any provision for penalisation of the latter category. Ms. Ganguly also told us that for now, our focus should be on following the due process established by law, instead of putting them back to their original habitat as they might not be able to survive.

We also had a conversation with a Bengaluru based Advocate Brinda Nandakumar, who works on litigation in wildlife and environmental laws. She highlighted an issue that unfortunately the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 has given all major powers to a single authority of the concerned states, called the Wildlife Warden. This has virtually and impliedly made this authority arbitrary in taking its decisions and for this issue- the granting of a No-Objection Certificate to interested individuals. While in some states the Wildlife Warden and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests are two different posts/authorities, many, alike Karnataka, there is no distinction and both authorities lie in a single person.

For our Field Trip, we planned to visit a total of six shrines in different regions of Karnataka, the methodology for which is mentioned later. The identified sites with their respective locations and name of captive elephants are as follows:

1. Yedyur - Shri Siddhalingeswara Temple - *Gangashree* (49)
2. Hampi – Shri Virupaksha Temple - *Lakshmi* (29)
3. Humcha - Padmavati Jain Temple, Hombuja Mutt - *Aishwarya* (47)
4. Sringeri - Shri Sharada Peetham – *Jayalakshmi* (19), *Shrilakshmi* (20)
5. Dharmasthala* – Manjunatheshwara Temple – *Ganga*
6. Subrahmanya - Kukke Sri Subrahmanya Temple - *Yashasvi* (14)

*[Questionnaire session could not be initiated as after reaching there we were informed that the elephant was taken away temporarily for the purpose of her procreation.]



Our 12 day long field work commenced on the morning of 14th November as we left for Yedyuru, followed by Hampi (16th, 17th and 18th November), followed by Humcha on 19th November, followed by Sringeri (20th, 21st and 22nd November), followed by Dharmasthala on 23rd November, however after reaching since we were made aware that the Elephant has been sent to Sakribelle Camp for mating, we went to Subrahmanya, our last site of the field work on 24th Novemeber, the survey wherein lasted till 26th November. In the late night of the same day we left back for Bengaluru.

METHODOLOGY

Our first step was to select the sites, i.e., temples as we aim to study this industry which thrives in Karnataka. These were chosen on the following bases:

1. *Presence of elephant(s) in temple property*
2. *Private or government ownership*
3. *Geographic diversity- inclusion of different parts of Karnataka, as much as feasible*
4. *Diversity of faith and belief-* selection of temples associated with Hinduism, Jainism and Dvaita as well as Advaita Philosophy
5. *Diversity in opinion-* Selection of Hampi's Virupaksha Temple that attracts non religiously inclined tourists as well.

Since our research question delves into understanding opinions and thought processes, we found a questionnaire to be the best tool to study this. We drafted our questionnaire containing 19 questions, other than basic information like- age, education, location. Of the 19 questions, we chose the 4 most relevant to our study-

1. DO YOU THINK THERE IS A RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE BEHIND ELEPHANTS IN TEMPLES?
2. WOULD YOU STOP COMING TO THE TEMPLE IF THERE WERE NO ELEPHANTS HERE?
3. ACCORDING TO PREVENTION TO CRUELTY ACT, 1960, YOU CAN REPORT MISTREATMENT OF ANIMALS TO POLICE. KNOWING THIS WOULD YOU REPORT IT.
4. WOULD YOU REPORT THE MISTREATMENT OF TEMPLE ELEPHANTS?

The Gender ratio of our respondents is almost equal. We did simple random sampling of respondents on reaching the location itself. Different places had different reactions to the project. Places like Hampi, Humcha were more relaxed with more people comfortable in answering our questions. In comparison, Sringeri, Yedyuru and Kukke Subrahmanya were more conservative locations. Some people weren't comfortable answering questions, some even offended at the purpose of this study. At Subrahmanya, for example, Nidhi was stopped by a man of about 40 well-versed in English, who was unhappy with the survey being conducted around the temple premises. He went on to say that he felt the younger generation was trying to wipe out traditions, which did not bode well in his mind.

Other than interviewing just respondents, we also questioned priests and temple authorities about the significance of elephants in temples. Again, some were cooperative and offered valuable insight while some refused to comment. These were semi-structured interviews that had no bearing on the statistical analysis of the survey. However, they informed our understanding of the practice, especially its religious significance. Vignettes from these conversations have been mentioned later in this report.

FINDINGS

I. STATA AND CODING KEY

The size of our sample was 90. We ran our survey through Stata to compute it and represent it graphically. Our background variables, as included in our questionnaire were, gender, occupation, age, educational qualification, residence. However, we concentrate on the 2 variables of age and educational qualification for the purpose of our study. At the outset, inherent in our selection of the 2 variables was the assumption that the younger sample would be more inclined to disapprove of the practice and that there would be an inverse relationship between educational qualification and support for this. While running the collected data through Stata, for the ease of understanding, we divided the background variable of age and educational qualifications into groups and coded them. Please find below the key to the coded variables:

CODES- RESPONSES

1	YES
2	NO
99	DON'T KNOW
11	HIGHLY LIKELY
22	LIKELY
33	SOMEWHAT LIKELY
44	NOT UNLIKELY
55	HIGHLY UNLIKELY

CODE- AGE IN YEARS

5	18-28 YEARS
6	29-38 YEARS
7	39-48 YEARS
8	49-58 YEARS
9	ABOVE 58 YEARS

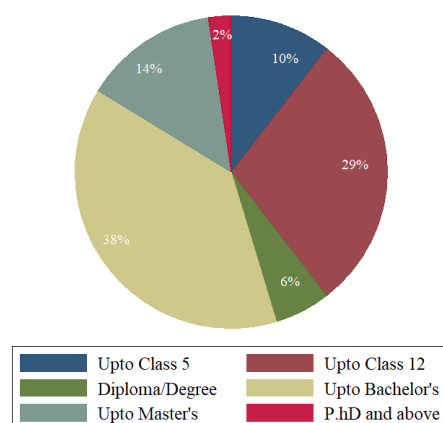
CODE-EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

15	Upto Class 5
16	Upto Class 12
17	Diploma/Degree
18	Upto Bachelor's
19	Upto Master's
20	P.hD and above

II. SAMPLE SIZE AND GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF BACKGROUND VARIABLES

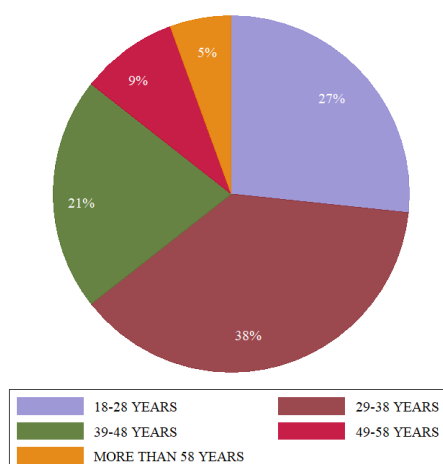
- a) The pie-graph shows the age composition of the sample. A substantial chunk of the sample belonged to the age group between 29-38 (35%) and then 18-28 (27%) and 39-48 (21%) years respectively.

PIE GRAPH SHOWING THE EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF RESPONDENTS



- b) The pie-graph shows the educational qualification of the sample. A substantial chunk of the sample belonged to the group who had completed their Bachelor's degree (38%) followed by those who had studied up to class 12 (29%) and then those who had completed their Master's (14%).

PIE-CHART SHOWING THE AGE COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE



III. SELECTED RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **Do you think there is a religious significance behind elephants in temples?**

1.	2.	99.
YES	NO	DON'T KNOW

If yes,.....

This question was selected since it directly addresses whether or not people believe that the practice of keeping elephants in temples is sacrosanct. The response categories are yes, no and don't know. The last category is for respondents who either didn't grasp the question or wanted to refrain from answering owing to the nature of the question.

The tail question has been included to substantiate the "yes" response. We wanted to capture personal takes on the significance since people hailing from different backgrounds wouldn't really have uniform accounts.

- **Would you stop coming to the temple if there were no elephants here?**

1.	2.	99.
YES	NO	DON'T KNOW

This question was included to measure whether or not elephants constitute an inviolable, indispensable part of people's worship, and whether they would stop coming to the temple in the absence of one. The response categories are the same as mentioned above.

- **There is a Prevention of Cruelty Act, 1960, according to which you can report mistreatment of an animal to the police. Knowing this, how likely are you to report it:**

How likely are you to report the mistreatment of a temple elephant:

11.	22.	33.	44.	55.
HIGHLY LIKELY	LIKELY	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	NOT LIKELY	HIGHLY UNLIKELY

These are two questions, the comparative analysis of which would reveal a lot about the public perception surrounding the practice. The first question informs the respondent that there are legal provisions in place which facilitate reporting in case an abuse of animals is witness. In the face of this information, how likely were they to report it. The second question pertains to the respondent's inclination to report the abuse of a temple elephant. The question seeks to capture the difference in the inclination to report abuse against any other animal, say, a stray dog versus a temple elephant. The response categories range from highly likely to highly unlikely.

IV. CROSS-TABULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

a) The first selected question relating to the religious significance of elephants has been divided into age-wise responses and educational-qualification wise responses.

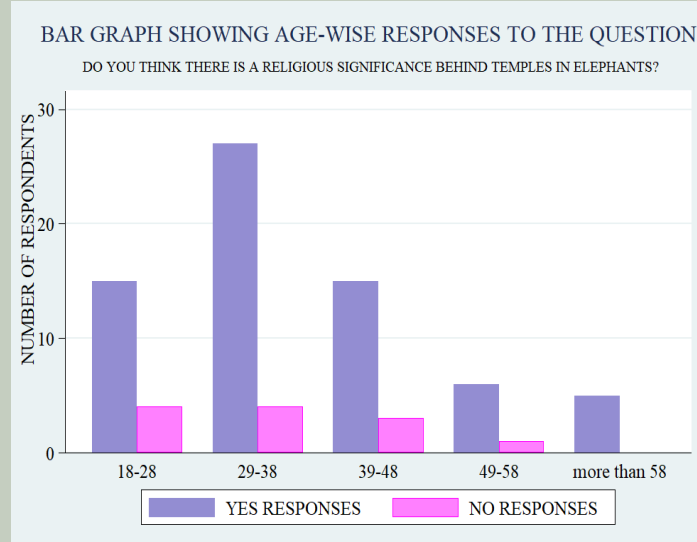
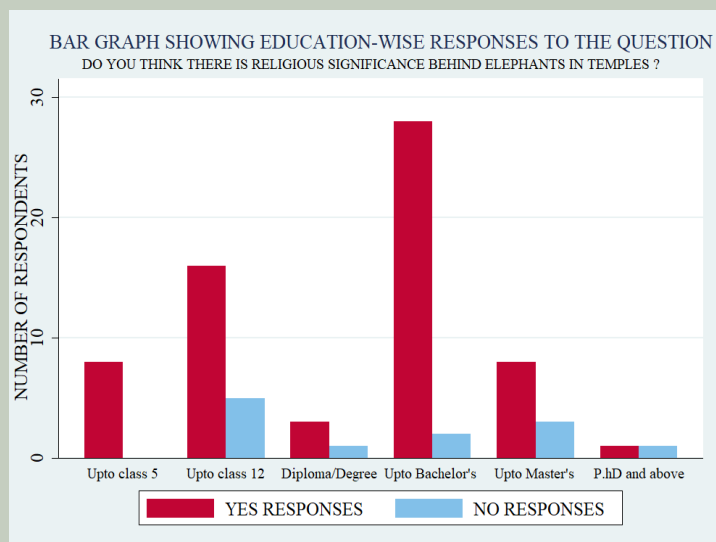
Alongside, is the cross-tabulation for age-wise responses to the question (refer to coding key in part I of this segment). Overall, 75.56% of the respondents said “yes”, implying that they believed in the religious significance of temple elephants. Of the “yes” responses, a majority was constituted by the respondents in the age group 29-38 (coded as 6). On the other hand, overall, 13.33% respondents said “no”, implying that they didn’t believe in it. Of the very limited responses, a simple majority belonged to the age group 19-28 (coded as 5) and 29-38 (coded as 6).

Key							
		frequency					
		row percentage					
		column percentage					
04-religious significance	Age	5	6	7	8	9	Total
1		15 22.06 62.50	27 39.71 79.41	15 22.06 78.95	6 8.82 75.00	5 7.35 100.00	68 100.00 75.56
2		4 33.33 16.67	4 33.33 11.76	3 25.00 15.79	1 8.33 12.50	0 0.00 0.00	12 100.00 13.33
99		5 50.00 20.83	3 30.00 8.82	1 10.00 5.26	1 10.00 12.50	0 0.00 0.00	10 100.00 11.11
Total		24 26.67 100.00	34 37.78 100.00	19 21.11 100.00	8 8.89 100.00	5 5.56 100.00	90 100.00 100.00

Alongside, is the cross tabulation for educational-qualification wise responses to the question. Overall, 74.42% of the respondents said “yes” they believed in the religious significance of temple elephants, across educational qualifications. Out of the “yes” responses, 43.75% were those who had completed their Bachelor’s (coded as 18). Overall, 13.95% respondents said “no”, implying that they didn’t believe in it. Of these, a simple majority belonged to the group which had completed up till class 12 (coded as 16).

04-religious significance	Edu Qualification						Total
	15	16	17	18	19	20	
1	8 12.50 88.89	16 25.00 64.00	3 4.69 60.00	28 43.75 84.85	8 12.50 66.67	1 1.56 50.00	64 100.00 74.42
2	0 0.00 0.00	5 41.67 20.00	1 8.33 20.00	2 16.67 6.06	3 25.00 25.00	1 8.33 50.00	12 100.00 13.95
99	1 10.00 11.11	4 40.00 16.00	1 10.00 20.00	3 30.00 9.09	1 10.00 8.33	0 0.00 0.00	10 100.00 11.63
Total	9 10.47 100.00	25 29.07 100.00	5 5.81 100.00	33 38.37 100.00	12 13.95 100.00	2 2.33 100.00	86 100.00 100.00

The “don’t know” responses (coded as 99), have been eliminated from our analysis for the sake of clarity, in the following questions as well.



In the first bar graph, relating to age-wise responses, the “yes” responses far outweigh the “no” responses as is the case in education-wise responses. No matter the age or the educational qualification of the sample, they would be more inclined to believe in the religious significance of temple elephants.

The tail question which was “If yes,...”, urged the respondents to share the reasons that they had heard or knew behind the significance. There were 3 main reasons which are as follows:

- Reincarnation of Lord Ganesha- Because of the trunk and Lord Ganesha’s story, many respondents associated the temple elephant with the deity. Many also associated it with “Gajalakshmi”.
- King’s legacy- In temples of Hampi and Humcha, respondents as well as temple administrators associated the magnificent creature with yesteryear splendour of monarchs and royalty. In Hampi, there are remnants of the Vijaynagar empire, where 11 grand structures are made where the royal elephants would rest.
- Glory of the “kshetra”- Some of the priests, like the one at Humcha, spoke about a religious precinct called “kshetra”, the glory of which would increase manifold if the temple had *ashwa*, *gau* and *gaja* or horses, cows and elephants.

b) The second selected question related to whether or not the respondents would stop coming to the temple if there was no elephant and the responses were divided into age-wise and education-wise.

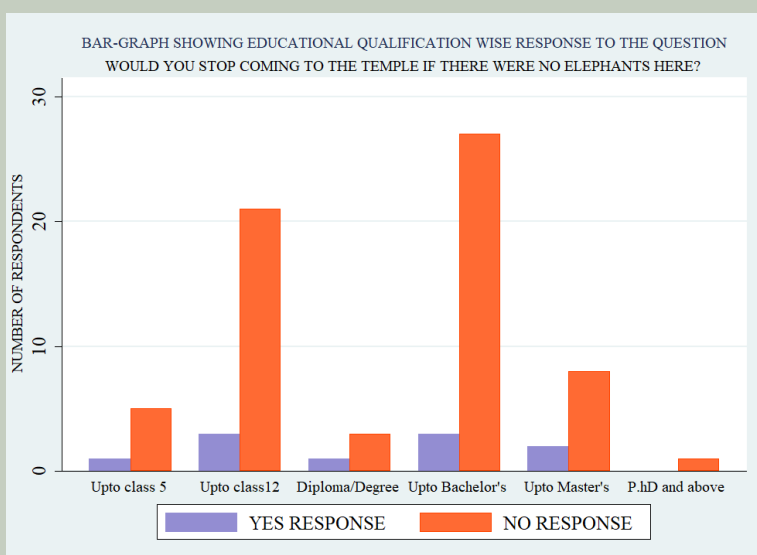
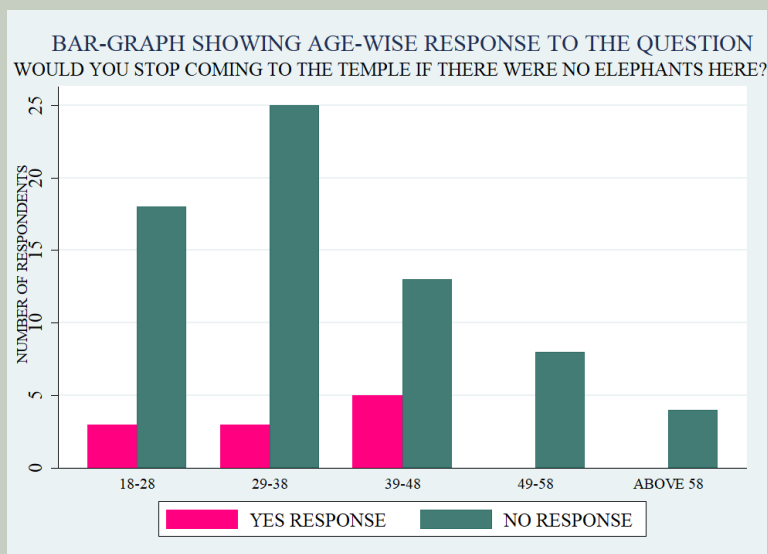
Alongside is the age-wise response to the question. Overall, 75.56% of the respondents said “no” (coded as 2), implying that they would not stop coming to the temple if there was no elephant. Of this 36.76% belonged to the age group 29-38 and 26.47% belonged to the age group 18-28. On the other hand, overall, 12.22% respondents said “yes”, that they would stop coming to the temple if there was no elephant. Of this a simple majority belonged to the age-group 39-48 (coded as 7).

Alongside is the educational qualification wise response to the question. Overall, 75.58% of the responses said “no”, implying that they wouldn’t stop coming to the temple if there was no elephant. Of this, a sizeable majority belonged to the group which had studied up to class 12 and that had studied up to Bachelor’s. There were limited people who said they would stop coming in the same event (11.63%).

Key						
frequency						
row percentage						
column percentage						
15-stop coming if no ele	Age					Total
	5	6	7	8	9	
1	3	3	5	0	0	11
	27.27	27.27	45.45	0.00	0.00	100.00
	12.50	8.82	26.32	0.00	0.00	12.22
2	18	25	13	8	4	68
	26.47	36.76	19.12	11.76	5.88	100.00
	75.00	73.53	68.42	100.00	80.00	75.56
99	3	6	1	0	1	11
	27.27	54.55	9.09	0.00	9.09	100.00
	12.50	17.65	5.26	0.00	20.00	12.22
Total	24	34	19	8	5	90
	26.67	37.78	21.11	8.89	5.56	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

15-stop coming if no ele	Edu Qualification						Total
	15	16	17	18	19	20	
1	1	3	1	3	2	0	10
	10.00	30.00	10.00	30.00	20.00	0.00	100.00
	11.11	12.00	20.00	9.09	16.67	0.00	11.63
2	5	21	3	27	8	1	65
	7.69	32.31	4.62	41.54	12.31	1.54	100.00
	55.56	84.00	60.00	81.82	66.67	50.00	75.58
99	3	1	1	3	2	1	11
	27.27	9.09	9.09	27.27	18.18	9.09	100.00
	33.33	4.00	20.00	9.09	16.67	50.00	12.79
Total	9	25	5	33	12	2	86
	10.47	29.07	5.81	38.37	13.95	2.33	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

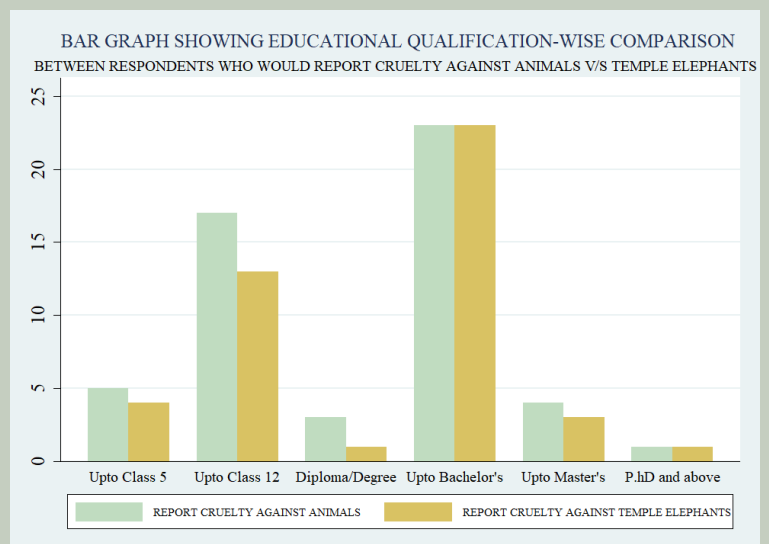
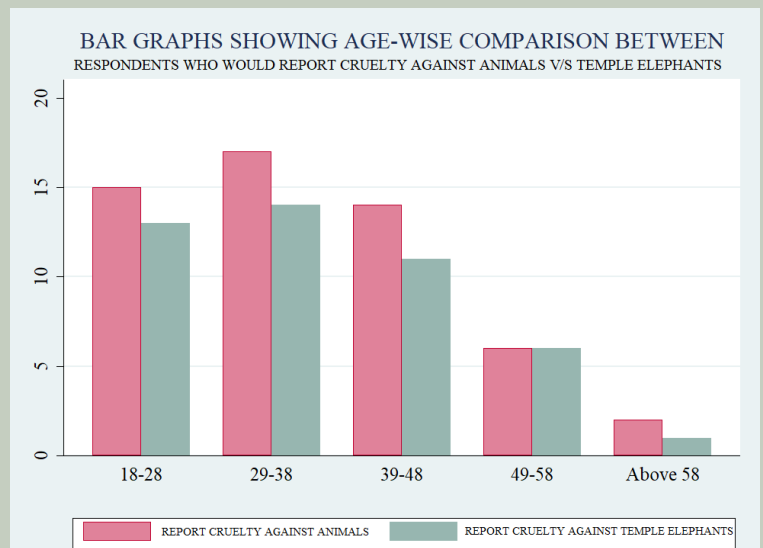
In both cases, the “no” responses far outstrip the “yes” responses. Respondents in the age group between 29-38 and respondents who had completed their Bachelor’s were the least likely to stop coming to the temple if there was no elephant. This implies that the respondents don’t find the physical presence of an elephant an indispensable part of their worship. However, maybe they don’t go against the status quo since people tend to steer clear of controversial, opposing strands in matters of religion.



c) The third question seeks to compare the inclination of respondents to report the abuse of an animal, for example, a stray dog, versus a temple elephant. More demonstrative than the cross-tabs would be bar graphs in this case.

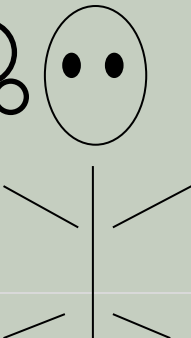
The bar graphs relating to age-wise responses shows a consistent difference between inclination to report abuse of any animal versus a temple elephant and similar is the trend in the education qualification wise responses.

This trend could be because of the aspect of religion that creeps in in the latter. People might not want to report to concerned authorities even if the elephant is being mistreated since they don't want to be in direct confrontation with religious agents or bodies.



V. ANECDOTES

We encountered certain respondents or people who had interesting insights to share. Some of them are as follows:



While interviewing a priest, some interesting facts came out. He seemed to maintain that the elephant has been kept since the temple has the capacity to afford it and it seems to attract visitors. But he proclaimed that **“GOD WILL NOT PUNISH IF THERE IS NO ELEPHANT IN THE TEMPLE”**

This respondent who was a resident of Pune made a comment that has created an impression- **“LAW IS NOT A LOGICAL PHENOMENON, IT IS AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PHENOMENON!”** By which he meant you can’t take elephants away from temples that have 1000 years of history.

One of us interacted with a man in his late 30s, very well-versed with English, seemingly very educated, at Kukke Subrahmanya Temple who refused to record his responses in the questionnaire. However, he expressed his views unequivocally- **“EDUCATED PEOPLE SHOULD NOT FORGET THEIR ROOTS AND INTERFERE WITH TRADITION!”**

The Managing Director of Siddhalingeswara Temple in Yedyuru introduced us to one of the members of the temple administration who was against the practice. He informed us of the political influence behind keeping elephants in temples. He didn’t hesitate in saying **that the elephant in their temple was donated by then hief Minister J.H. Patel through government orders.**

CONCLUSION

The literature review led us to conclude that elephants if relocated from their natural habitat to an artificial habitat would inevitably lead to their torture and cruel treatment. While zeroing in on captivity of elephants in temples, our experiences reaffirmed the conclusion. This conclusion acted as our premise while exploring the potential policy interventions. Being conscious of the fact that elephant are not meant to be domesticated, we realised the need for an intervention to bring an end to the practice of captivity in temples. **In the beginning itself, we eliminated the possibility of carrying out legal survey for two primary reasons:**

- Legal interventions have been carried out for long but with no effect towards ending the captivity of elephants in temples; also a matter on the similar subject-matter was sub-judice in the Supreme Court.
- Legal intervention if carried out without strategizing the effect on stakeholders would either potentially lead to non-compliance or violence.

The stakeholder analysis then led us to the two most important stakeholders who through their actions legitimise the captivity of temple elephants i.e. **temple administration and devotees**. In the initial stage of this project, we tried engaging with the temple administration but they were reluctant to cooperate and share information. So we looked at people who were visiting these temples, mainly devotees and tourists to capture their perception about the captivity of elephants. One of the motivations behind measuring attitude of these visitors was to ascertain the importance they attach to elephants in temples so as to predict their reactions if the acquisition of temple elephants take place.

Amongst other variables, we focused on 3 variables to measure the attitudes of devotees:

1. Respondents' (across age and educational qualification) view on religious significance of elephants.
2. Presence of temple elephant as a decisive factor for their visit to temple.
3. Their likelihood of reporting the mistreatment of temple elephants.

Following are the findings:

- On an average, the respondents across age and educational qualifications believe that there is a religious significance of elephants. Respondents within the age group of 29-38 along with the respondents holding Bachelor's degree were more likely to believe in the religious significance of elephants.
- Majority of the respondents would not stop coming to temples in absence of the elephant.
Respondents within the age group of 29-38 along with the highly qualified respondents were more unlikely to stop visiting temple in the absence of elephants.

- It produced a mixed result. Respondents except within the age group of 49-58 and with or above Bachelors' qualification were not likely to report the mistreatment of temple elephant but will report for ordinary animal.

Our survey suggests that though majority of the visitors believe in the religious significance of elephants and that they won't stop coming to temples in the absence of elephants. Other findings on the reporting of mistreatment of elephant suggests that devotees are less likely to speak against the religious institutions.

Based on these findings we conclude that- **any intervention which can persuade temple administration in voluntarily relinquishing the elephant would be the most appropriate intervention.** We kept this in mind while forwarding the following recommendations:

- Monetary disincentives – 30% tax on annual revenue earned by the temple to be given to the Forest Department by temples keeping elephants
- Bureaucratic hurdles- Yearly renewal of ownership license with an increment in the fee every additional year, to make the process more cumbersome and expensive
- Immediate revocation of ownership certification where there is gross violation of guidelines
- Complete ban on giving licenses in states where they are not naturally found, like Jaipur
- Inviting CSRs for campaigns like Save the Tiger for increasing public awareness
- Online petitions for public awareness by creating graphic imagery like that used against the Yulin festival that invited global outcry
- Prohibit the use of bull-hooks or *Ankush* as most of our respondents supported the use of this instrument of discipline which is an instrument of torture. An alternative disciplining or training method, for example, classical conditional that rewards good behaviour could be more humane.