

Hindutva's onward march in Kerala

The growth is not just ideological, but can also be clearly seen in electoral terms



P.K. YASSER ARAFATH

Secular and democratic Malayalis are hoping that Hindutva will continue to remain undesirable in Kerala, where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) got no seats in the 2019 parliamentary election. Political commentators and non-Hindutva Malayalis are busy providing a long list of factors that ensured the BJP's defeat in the State. These include 'enlightenment', 'education', 'political awareness', 'progressiveness', and 'strong communist sensibilities'. In the process, the argument for a rethinking of Hindutva and an understanding of its everyday growth amongst the upper castes and new upwardly mobile social groups has effectively been contained.

A different trajectory

Unlike many northern States where Hindutva has been making consistent electoral inroads, its growth in Kerala has a slightly different trajectory. In Kerala, ideological Hindutva took precedence over electoral Hindutva. And in the process, it built a cohesive network of informed loyalists across the State. From the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha in the first quarter of the 20th century to the present, Hindutva has been successful in ideologically shaping a substantial section of the Hindu middle class in the State. Starting with disgruntled elites, former ruling households and landed aristocracy in the 1940s, Hindutva managed to reach out to middle class entrepreneurs by the 1970s. Over the last 20 years, it has been successful in attracting a significant section of aspirational lower/intermediary caste groups like the Ezhavas. However, people overlook how Hindutva has made steady electoral inroads into the State over the last 15 years.

A microanalysis of the National Democratic Alliance/BJP vote share in Kerala in the last three parliamentary elections questions the Malayali euphoria. Electoral data show that if Hindutva can sustain its current acceptability among the larger Hindu



"The 'poach Northeast' policy, which successfully attracted a significant number of Christian religious outfits and leaders, is being attempted in Kerala too." A BJP campaign in Thiruvananthapuram. • S.GOPAKUMAR

population, Kerala is only 10 years away from what West Bengal has become today, where Hindutva has established its strong presence after working patiently for more than a century. In the 2009 parliamentary election, the BJP alone secured more than 10 lakh votes in Kerala (6.31% of the total votes polled). With no 'wave' in sight and the BJP's chances in every single parliamentary constituency being zero, each voter in this 10 lakh block stood testimony to the ideological reach that Hindutva made after a hundred years of beginning its work since the early 20th century.

A better picture emerges when we take a closer look at the total vote share in Kerala, where Muslims and Christians constitute over 45% of the population. If we assume that the bulk of the votes was from the Hindu community, as the BJP is seen as a Hindu majoritarian party, and that Muslims and Christians had little reason to vote for the BJP in 2009, then the BJP actually secured more than 11% (around 10 lakh votes) of the total Hindu votes (around 90 lakh), who constituted 55% of the total voters,

numbering around 1.65 crore. Thus, the popular perception of the BJP's 6.31% votes in 2009 does not reflect the appropriate picture of Hindutva's electoral and ideological growth in Kerala. Going by the same logic, in 2014, the BJP alone secured 19% (around 19 lakh votes) from the Hindu majority electorate (around 1 crore), jumping from the previous 11%. However, political analysts continue to assert that the BJP only secured 10.33% vis-a-vis the total votes polled in the State.

The results of this general election show a tremendous inclination among the majority of voters to adopt the social, moralistic, and ideological sensibilities of Hindutva. The BJP-led NDA secured around 32 lakh votes from this constituency of voters (over 1.11 crore), who comprised about 50% of the total polled votes (around 2.3 crore). Such a shift is quite an eye-opener in the wake of massive resentment in the State against the Modi government's lukewarm response to the devastating floods in Kerala and its aftermath in 2018. The Hindutva mood in the State seems to have enhanced as the

BJP used the Sabarimala issue to expand its electoral and ideological base. Thus, the NDA's 32 lakh votes in 2019 shows a significant increasing section of the Hindu electorate preferring the BJP's ideology despite demonetisation, the Goods and Services Tax, unemployment, the Modi government's antipathy towards the State, and the presence of strong and consistent anti-Hindutva narratives in the State.

The micro details of these three elections clearly show that the BJP has been growing really fast among the majority electorate. With this growth rate, which is most likely to persist, the Sangh Parivar is not far away from garnering about 50% of the majority electorate in the next 10 years. The argument about this possibility can also be supported by a survey by the Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) which clearly shows how the NDA successfully secured more than 38% of the upper caste vote in Kerala in 2019. An undivided 50% from the majority electorate would definitely help Hindutva make strong electoral inroads into Kerala as it happened in West Bengal.

Replicating the Northeast policy

As the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has already positioned the Sabarimala controversy as a repeatable emotive investment like the Ram Mandir issue, maintaining such a growth rate and acceptance seem feasible. This can work with critical support from sections of the media, individuals from the film industry and bureaucracy, and a wide network of socio-ritual gatherings at both micro and macro levels.

This growth rate can be further strengthened if Hindutva succeeds in building what can be termed the 'Christian electoral corridor' in southern Kerala with the support of a number of prominent Christian notables in the NDA such as Alphons Kannanthanam, P.C. George, Tom Vadakkan and P.C. Thomas.

Clearly, the 'poach Northeast' policy, which successfully attracted a significant number of Christian religious outfits and leaders over a period of time, is being attempted in Kerala too.

P.K. Yasser Arafath is Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Delhi

A scheme for farmers that has not reached most farmers

PM-Kisan is limited in both scope and implementation



BHIM REDDY AND ABHISHEK SHAW

The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan), a cash transfer programme that draws on major initiatives by two State governments, has a long way to go in terms of both its implementation and scope of coverage. Even as the cropping season is under way, the scheme's support has not reached farmers in most of the country's regions.

Launched by the Centre at the end of its previous tenure and made effective retrospectively from December 1, 2018, the measure is a necessary state response to assuage agrarian unrest. The scheme's original objective, to "supplement financial needs" of the country's Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs) and to "augment" farm incomes, has now been broadened to include all categories of agricultural landowners. This expansion would benefit an additional 10% of rural landed households.

PM-Kisan offers ₹6,000 a year per household in three instalments. Broadly speaking, this amounts to only about a tenth of the production cost per hectare or consumption expenditure for a poor household. Hence, though what the programme offers is meagre, it promises some relief to poor farmers by partially supplementing their input costs or consumption needs.

Not linked to land size

The cash transfer is not linked to the size of the farmer's land, unlike Telangana's Rythu Bandhu scheme, under which farmers receive ₹8,000 per annum for every acre owned. While landless tenants have been left out in both the schemes, the link with land size makes the support provided by the Telangana scheme more substantial. PM-Kisan also falls short of Odisha's Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme, which includes even poor rural households that do not own land.

Though the first quarterly instalment, for the December 2018-March 2019 period, was to be provided in the last financial year, the benefits of PM-Kisan have not reached farmers in most parts of the country. With kharif cultivation activity under way already, the scheme's potential to deliver is contingent on its immediate implementation.

There are 125 million farming households

owning small and marginal holdings of land in the country, who constitute the scheme's original intended beneficiaries. However, at present, the list of beneficiaries includes only 32% (40.27 million) of these households.

Further, a majority of the intended beneficiary households are yet to receive even their first instalment of ₹2,000. Only 27% (33.99 million) received the first instalment, and only 24% (29.76 million) received the second. In budgetary terms, only 17% of the estimated ₹75,000 crore expenditure has been spent. Moreover, implementation in certain States has been prioritised. U.P., for instance, accounts for one-third of total beneficiary households – 33% (11.16 million) in the first instalment and 36% (10.84 million) in the second. About half of the State's SMF households have been covered. Only two other States – Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh – have gained a prominent share. A total of 17 States have received a negligible share of the first instalment, accounting for less than 9%.

Larger structural issues

For the scheme to be effective, PM-Kisan needs to be uniformly implemented across regions. However, one needs to be mindful that it is not a fix for larger structural issues. Cash transfers will cease to be effective if the state withdraws from its other long-term budgetary commitments in agricultural markets and areas of infrastructure such as irrigation. Subsidies for inputs, extension services, and procurement assurances provide a semblance of stability to agricultural production. Food security through the National Food Security Act is also closely linked to government interventions in grain markets. If the budgetary allocations shift decisively in favour of cash transfers, they will be a cause for great concern. Further, the scheme recognises only landowners as farmers. Tenants, who constitute 13.7% of farm households and incur the additional input cost of land rent, don't stand to gain anything if no part of the cultivated land is owned. Hence, there is a strong case to include landless tenants and other poor families.

Moreover, though the scheme is conceptualised to supplement agricultural inputs, it ceases to be so without the necessary link with scale of production (farm size) built into it. It becomes, in effect, an income supplement to landowning households. If income support is indeed the objective, the most deserving need to be given precedence.

Bhim Reddy is a Fellow at the Institute for Human Development, Delhi; Abhishek Shaw is a doctoral student in Economics

Not a bloodless option for India

A cyberattack may not prove to be a feasible retaliatory measure for strategists in New Delhi

SIDHARTH KAPOOR

Amidst U.S.-Iran tensions, an American drone was shot down by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in June. President Donald Trump delivered a customary response on Twitter stating that Iran had made a "very big mistake". A military strike was planned, and even authorised, but later called off by Mr. Trump who apparently favours bloodless wars.

In pursuance of this bloodless war, the U.S. cybercommand conducted online attacks against Iran. It is speculated that the strikes targeted Iran's military command and systems such as those that control Iran's missile and rocket launchers. In this context, a general question that arises is: Can India conduct such retaliatory attacks?

After every terror attack, India has few kinetic options to retaliate. Primarily, they comprise air strikes, ground-based surgical strikes, stand-off strikes from inside the border and covert operations. Additionally, there is the option to impose diplomatic pressure on Pakistan.

The implicit criteria

Following India's response against Pakistan, especially on the past two occasions, a few implicit criteria relating to the handling of the aftermath of an operation can be deduced. It is necessary to meet, or foresee the meeting of, these criteria before any operation is incorporated into India's arsenal of retaliatory options. It is pertinent to note that these criteria are not in the context of the operational requirements of the Indian armed forces. The criteria are: pre-emption, non-military nature, and deterrence.

First, the fulfilment of the criterion of pre-emption would allow India to argue and justify the operation on international forums. It feasibly falls under the exception of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter through the passage of self-defence. Second, in such instances, the operational aim has never been to target the Pakistani people or even the Pakistani military. Accordingly, it is imperative for any

operation to be able to claim that it is non-military in nature. Third, the operation should be of such an impact that it creates deterrence, that is, it fulfils the purpose of imposing substantial damage on the enemy, which invariably leads to deterrence.

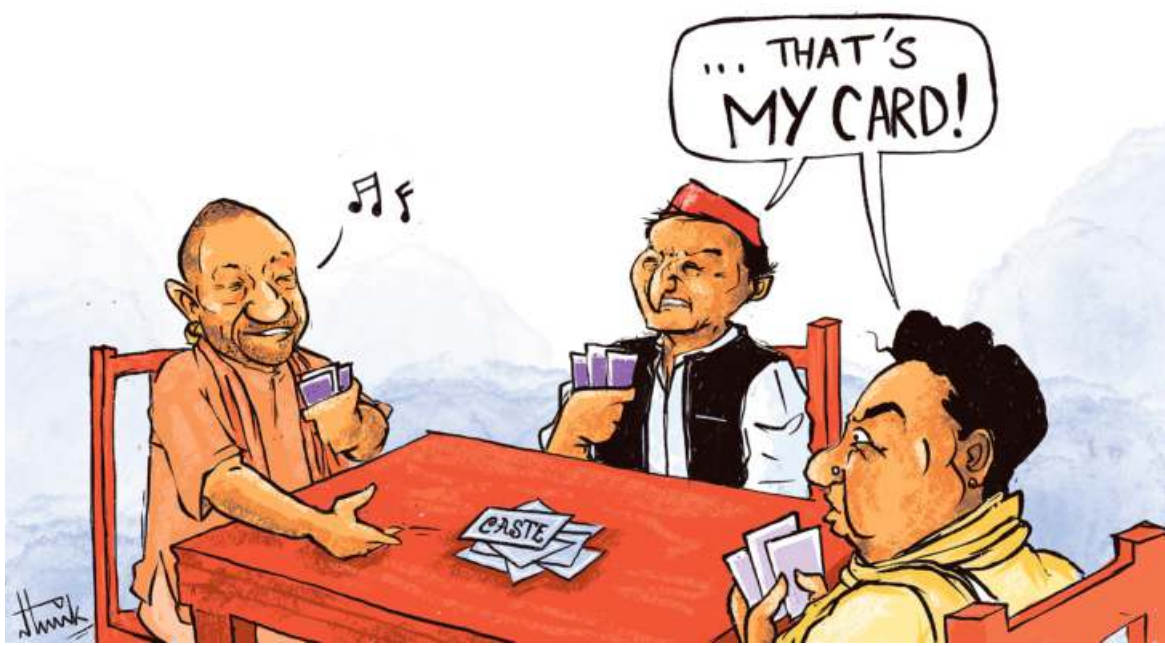
Aimed at the establishment

The conduct of U.S. cybercommand was aimed at the Iranian establishment, specifically targeting its military installations. If India conducts a cyberstrike against Pakistan's military command or systems, it will be termed as one against Pakistan and not the terrorists. The non-military nature and pre-emption of the operation will be viewed through the perspective of attacking Pakistani military and Pakistan in essence, rendering them as futile, for example in terms of diplomatic parleys. Further, a cyberstrike against Pakistan will call for counter-cyberstrikes. Instead of the intended deterrence, it will likely lead to an escalation. In such a situation, all or at least most of the criteria will not be met. Hence, a cyberattack is not a feasible retaliatory option for India at present.

It is, however, noteworthy that the dependency of terrorist groups on computers, networks and the Internet has increased. Various, if not all, terrorist groups use the Internet for propaganda. This can certainly be curtailed by any necessary cyberoperation. Most importantly, such an operation should not be a 'retaliatory operation' but a 'regular operation'.

A cyberattack can certainly be an option when the situation changes, and India decides to act against providers of safe haven to terrorists. In such instances, the Pakistani establishment might be targeted beyond diplomatic pressures. The ability of the Indian armed forces to conduct such cyberstrikes is not completely known, and rightly so, given that disclosure of such details would take away the element of surprise.

The writer is a researcher at the Observer Research Foundation



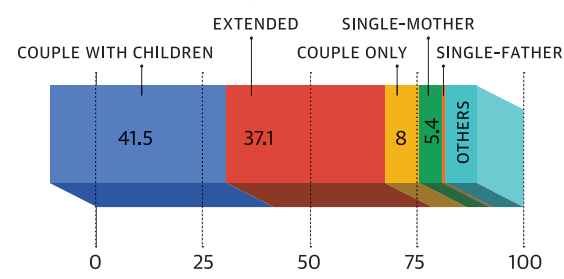
DATA POINT

Families & the gender divide

Though nuclear families are the norm in India, the percentage of single-mother households is on the rise. In India, there are far fewer women in the workforce compared to all other regions. By Varun B. Krishnan

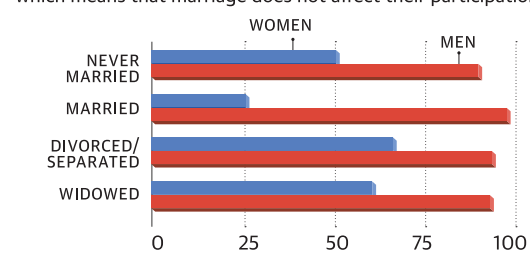
Society dynamics

Nuclear families (couple with children) form the highest % of households. Extended families (one or more parents or relatives) are also common. There are more single-mother households (5.4%) than single-father households



Participation in the workforce

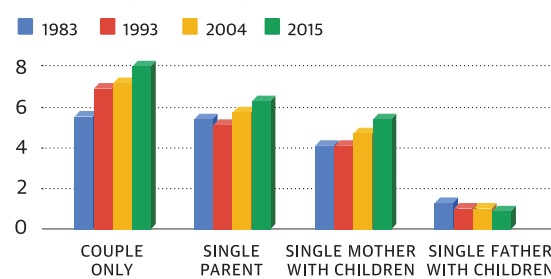
Over half the unmarried women aged 25-54 are part of the labour force. This proportion halves when they are married, possibly due to family constraints or requirements. A higher % of married men than single men are part of the labour force, which means that marriage does not affect their participation



Source: UN Progress of the World's Women, UN Household Composition DB

The changing household

As the nuclear family system has gained traction, the percentage of 'couple only' families has increased. The percentage of single mothers too has increased, corresponding to increasing rates of divorce in the country



Global low

Central and Southern Asia have the lowest % of women in the labour force, irrespective of their marital status. All the figures indicate % of women who are part of the workforce

Region	Married/In union	Divorced/separated	Never married
Central and Southern Asia	29.1	65.2	50.5
Eastern and Southeastern Asia	74.4	83.7	87.1
Europe and Northern America	78.2	86	84.7
Latin America and the Caribbean	60.3	80.7	77.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	73.8	75.6	64.3

FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 4, 1969

President's Rule for Bihar

The Internal Affairs Committee of the Union Cabinet, which met briefly after the Prime Minister's return to New Delhi this evening [July 3] to consider the Bihar situation, has accepted the Governor's recommendation for the imposition of President's rule in the State. An official announcement is expected to-morrow. The necessary proclamation under Article 356 of the Constitution will be issued from the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The Union Government has also accepted the Governor's suggestion that the Bihar Legislature should not be dissolved straightaway, but kept under suspension for the time being so that its members could participate in the Presidential election next month. The President of the Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee, Mr. A. P. Sharma, and the leader of the Congress Legislature Party, Mr. Harihar Singh, put up a brave fight against the imposition of President's rule. But they failed to convince the Central leaders that the Congress was in a position to form another coalition Government in the State. The two Bihar leaders were invited to attend the meeting of the Central Parliamentary Board tonight to personally present their case for permission to enter into a new coalition.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 4, 1919.

Influenza in Madras.

Dr. K. Raghavendra Rao, B.A., M.B & C.M., Ag. Health Officer, Corporation of Madras, writes to us: I have the honour to request you to kindly publish the following for the information of the public: "During the last fortnight there has been an increase in the incidence of fever cases in the City and it appears to be due to a recrudescence of Influenza. Considering the distress and suffering caused to the public during the last epidemic, it is as well that people in this City be warned, so that they can readily adopt suitable prophylactic and curative measures against this disease. An attack of Influenza is easily recognised by the sudden onset of fever, accompanied with a little cold in the nose and a slight cough, associated with severe prostration. It is very dangerous to neglect the patient even for a few hours owing to the liability of complicating Pneumonia. If treated at home, the patient should be isolated in an airy, well-ventilated room, with only one or two attendants. The nasal secretions and sputum should be thoroughly disinfected by receiving them in carbolic lotion or in boiling water."