



A Unique Politics in Kerala: Game change in the light of Secular Vs. Communist Ideology

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Abstract: Kerala, is the land of Gods and the most advanced state where educated people are known to live. In Kerala, the first Communist government was formed under the leadership of EMS Namboodiripad by defeating Congress hegemony from the state. Both Congress and the Left parties are sharing the power of the state alternatively. Both the alliances are followers of Secularism. The caste-based vote bank politics is omnipresent in every state and party like Kerala. Both LDF led by the Community Alliance and UDF led by the Congress alliance have very strongly placed their vote bank politics in their selected districts and communities. With the emergence of the BJP as the third force in Kerala, state politics has changed the long history of bi-polarized political scenarios.

Keywords: Bi-polar politics, minority vote bank, hegemony, dominating caste, land of Gods.

Introduction

In fact, Kerala is the first state in independent India to have democratically elected a fully communist-led (Communist Party of India) government into power, (Menon, 2007). Indian National Congress leads the United Democratic Front pre-poll alliance in Kerala. The alliance was created by the Congress (Indira) party leader K. Karunakaran in 1978 (Karunakaran, 6th January 2011, *Deccan Herald*). Since the 1980s, it has sustained itself as the front to take on the Communist Party of India Marxist-led Left Democratic Front. The alliance first came into power in Kerala in 1981 under K. Karunakaran. It led the Kerala government in 1981 – 82. The districts like Kannur and Palakkad are generally considered the heartland of communist support. All three major religions actively share their vote bank politics along with selected dominated higher castes like Nair in caste hierarchy, Ezahvas in OBC are

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playing major roles in state politics. However, Indian Union Muslim League is a major member of the United Democratic Front. The League first gained a ministry in the Kerala Government as part of a Communist Party of India Marxist-led alliance in the late 1960s. The party later switched fronts and formed an alliance with the Congress. It later became a chief constituent in a succession of Indian National Congress-lead governments in succeeding elections became a permanent partner of UDF-led state politics and got important ministerial posts in UDF-led alliances. Though, Kerala is ranked first in education and knowledge. However, state politics is not free from the orthodox caste system. Generally, Indians vote their castes and do not cast their votes. This is obviously practised in Kerala. Swami Vivekananda after experiencing caste orthodoxy in Kerala, stated that Kerala is a lunatic asylum, a madhouse of casteism (George Mathew, Indian Express: 24 December, 2018),

Literature Review

Of late, Kerala the first Communist state has become a centre of Indian political discourse. Hence, a number of scholars and academicians at the university level and in the political field are busy finding the uniqueness and exceptional voting behaviours of the state voters, who are highly educated and very alert in choosing their representatives both in national and state elections. The purpose of the present literature review is to gain an understanding of the existing research and debates relevant to the present study and to present that knowledge in the form of discussion. The change in the political scenario in alternative terms by two alliances led by UDF & LDF has created an interest among scholars, particularly in the field of politics. Many scholarly presentations have been made by political analysts, columnists and teachers like Prof. Sajid Ibrahim in his election analysis in the name of Kerala's Electoral Pendulum Swings Back and Forth, paper by J. Prabhash on Changing Voting Behaviour in Kerala Elections and discussions by Dr .M R Biju on Assembly election 2011.

Research Aims and Objective

The aims and objectives of the present study area are manifold. How the major political parties with their political manifestoes have been working with the idea of social engineering to use major and influential communities as vote banks in their favour to come in the corridor of state powers. Over the years RSS has worked hard to lay the foundation for the BJP in the state's bipolar landscape. How far have they succeeded in convincing the voters to vote in their favour is to be seen?

Research Methodology

The present study on Kerala politics along with the behavioural attitudes of three major religious communities and caste, and sub-caste peoples are under the study area. The study is primarily based on secondary data used and presented by important research institutes like CSDS-Lokniti, Election analysis centres and comments of political scholars in the form of articles, and news in leading papers, journals and magazines. All secondary data and political opinions of scholars in the form of critical review and analysis have been taken as primary tools to develop further opinions and conclusions.

History of Bi-polar politics in Kerala

The state is Kerala, where the most advanced and educated people are known to be living among the Indian States. Kerala like Bengal is marked by Marxian ideology, where the first Communist government was formed under the leadership of EMS Namboodiripad by defeating Congress hegemony in the Indian political arena. Both Congress and the Left parties are sharing the power of the state alternatively. The study done by various agencies like CSDS– Lokniti reveals that both Congress and Communists are followers of Secularism. The basic fabric of Indian democracy is also influencing vote bank politics in the state elections. The caste-based vote bank politics is omnipresent in every state and phase. Both LDF led by the Community Alliance and UDF led by the Congress alliance have very strongly placed their vote bank politics in their selected districts and communities. With the emergence of the BJP as the third force in Kerala, state politics has changed the long history of the bipolarized political scenario of Kerala. After the 2014 Lok Sabha election was fought successfully by the BJP under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the party took entry into the 2016 Assembly election in Kerala politics. The 2016 Assembly election was a three-cornered contest, where BJP stood as a third force, NDA alliance with Bharat Jana Sena (Kumar, 2016: *The Sunday Guardian*, 1-2).

The consecutive four Assembly elections in 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 surveyed by CSDS–Lokniti noticed some changing reality in Kerala politics. Caste politics has become a major tool played by both the UDF and LDF alliance in these state elections. All four election results with caste/community support reveal that the Nair and Ezhavas castes are the main vote banks of the Leftist parties. In those elections, LDF successfully kept the support of the Nair caste between 44 % and 45 %, whereas, in the 2006 and 2011 elections, the Ezhavas caste, the dominating OBC was basically a strong supporter of LDF, but in the 2016 election, this caste group had shifted their

Table 1: Major Caste/Community-wise vote bank politics in the last four Assembly Elections (in %)

| Community | UDF | | | | LDF | | | | BJP+ others | | | |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------|---------|------|------|
| | 2021 | 2016 | 2011 | 2006 | 2021 | 2016 | 2011 | 2006 | 2021 | 2016 | 2011 | 2006 |
| Hindus | 26 | 25 | | | 50 | 48 | | | 21+4 | 22+4 | | |
| Nair | 38 | 20 | 43 | 38 | 32 | 45 | 44 | 45 | 27+3 | 34+2 | 11 | 11 |
| Other upper castes | 35 | 53 | | | 27 | 36 | | | 32+6 | 11+(-1) | | |
| Ezhavas | 21 | 28 | 26 | 27 | 53 | 49 | 65 | 64 | 23 | 18 | 7 | 6 |
| Other OBCs | 17 | 27 | | | 61 | 49 | | | 18+4 | 19+5 | | |
| SCs | 21 | 22 | | | 69 | 51 | | | 7+4 | 23+4 | | |
| Muslims | 58 | 58 | 65 | 57 | 39 | 35 | 32 | 39 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Christian | 57 | 52 | 67 | 67 | 39 | 35 | 27 | 27 | 2 | 10 | 1 | 1 |
| Others and STs | 28 | 27 | | | 42 | 53 | | | 22+8 | 14+6 | | |

Sources: Lokniti-CSDS, 2021: *The Hindu*, 5th.May 2021: 5.

support from LDF to BJP. As a result, LDF vote share had come down from 65% in 2011 to 49% in the 2016 elections. But in the 2021 election, LDF increased its vote share from 49% to 53 % among the Ezhavas caste, which was a direct loss of 7% vote share of UDF. The Ezhavas OBC dominating caste also is a traditional vote bank of UDF. But this time the Congress could not retain its support from this major influential OBC caste. Subsequently, the BJP increased its vote share from 7% in 2011 to 18% in 2016 and further, the party increased its support in the 2021 election from this caste. The Nair caste votes were also shared by UDF at 38% in 2006 and 43% 2011 election, which sharply declined by 20 % in the 2016 election. But UDF showed great success in the 2021 election. The party increased its vote share by 18% more than the last election. The Nair upper caste Hindu vote shifted to BJP from UDF. The BJP increased its vote share from 11% in 2011 to 34% in 2016. The LDF did not face any loss from the Nair community vote as happened with the UDF in 2016, but in 2021, both LDF and BJP-led alliances reduced their support from the Nair community. The BJP's vote share went up by about 1.3 % points (from 4.75 % in 2006 to 6.03 % in 2011). The party's vote share, however, was lower than what it got in the Lok Sabha elections in 2009 (6.3%) and 2004 (10,4%). So far as the SCs vote bank is concerned, the LDF increased by 18% the vote share in the 2021 elections than the last assembly election. The BJP faced a heavy loss from SC's vote bank (23% in 2016 to 7% in 2021 elections). Is a direct gain for LDF to retain power.

The non-Ezhava OBCs whose support for the LDF climbed from 49 to 61% and this was largely at the expense of the UDF. However, the other OBC Ezhavas who

constitute around 20% of the population, showed no significant change in voting pattern. They have traditionally supported the LDF and continued to do so this time. The BJP also made some gains among the Ezhavas community which have come at the cost of the UDF. Last but not least, the UDF, has received a significant gain from the Nair community. The Congress-led UDF managed to get about two-fifths of their support in this election when the alliance received only one-fifth in the 2016 elections. All upper castes including Nairs were in fact the only community among whom the LDF did not make a significant change in favour of the ruling alliance.

Minority Vote bank Politics in state Elections

The Muslim population in Kerala is a decisive factor in all elections. The Congress party from its first general election and Assembly elections of the states has been enjoying full support from Muslim voters. The secular image of the Congress party always helps to credit Muslim loyalty in their favour in every election. However, with time, the Left parties as well as regional parties have attracted Muslim support in their favour. So far as Kerala is concerned, the Muslim votes are a key factor and force and have helped the Congress to lead UDF to come to power in every alternative term. The voting behaviour of Muslims of Kerala assessed in the last four Assembly elections reveals that UDF has a strong hold over this religious group. The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) is an alliance of Congress-led UDF which has become a strong base in Muslim-dominated districts. The IUML also helped the Congress to get votes from Muslim voters in other areas in Kerala. In the last four Assembly elections, UDF on average got more than 59 % votes from the Muslim community, whereas, the LDF could not increase its vote share from the same community. The range of votes in between was 32 % and 39%, which was less than 20% vote share from UDF. The stand of the BJP in the Muslim community is unpopular and still unacceptable. The vote share of the BJP from Muslim voters in the 2006 and 2011 Assembly elections was only 1% and in 2016 was 3% (Lokniti-CSDS, 2021: *The Hindu*, 5th.May 2021: 5).

The Christian voters are also very loyal to the Congress-led UDF in Kerala. Mr A K Antony and Mr Oman Chandi served as Chief Minister of the Congress party in Kerala. The UDF got 67% votes, the highest support from this religious community, in the 2006 and 2011 Assembly elections. However, in the 2016 election, Christian votes split and UDF faced a heavy loss in percentage of votes as it came down from 67% to 52 %. The decrease of vote share of UDF shifted to LDF and BJP in the last election. Both LDF and BJP were gainers. The LDF vote share increased from 27%

to 35 % and BJP from 1% to 10% in the last two elections. The LDF directly got 8% and the BJP 9% benefits with a loss of 15% by UDF (Prabhash and Sajad Ibrahim, 2017: 64-65).

The caste composition in Kerala Lok Sabha and Assembly elections is very prominent. In the 2009 general election, UDF succeeded in increasing its vote from all major castes and communities. Especially, the increase in minority support for UDF made a big victory for the 2009 election. The alliance got more than 70% of votes from both the minority communities, who constituted about 50 % of the total electorate. According to Sajad the minorities traditionally vote in large numbers for UDF. A coalition of community minorities which together can take a party or alliance near a plurality, led to the defeat of the LDF. The Christian-dominated constituencies overwhelmingly supported the UDF. In the 2009 election, the voting pattern shows that Muslim and Christian voters supported UDF (Sajad Ibrahim, 2014: 500.-501).

The Nair vote bank is always with LDF in Lok Sabha Elections, but in the 2009 election, they voted for UDF. The UDF alliance increased the Nair vote from 62% in 2006 to 71% in the 2009 elections. However, Ezahas, numerically large castes stood solidly behind the LDF. But the SCs community are real vote bank of LDF in all general elections in Kerala. More than seventy per cent of SC's votes counted in favour of Leftist parties. The BJP is at a crossroads in Kerala politics. The Hindu votes are not overwhelmingly supporting the BJP and its Hindutva ideology in vote bank politics (Yasser Arafat, 2019: The Hindu, 4, July 2019: 1.)

Table 2: Major Caste/Community-wise voting in Kerala Lok Sabha Elections (in %)

| Community | UDF | | | | LDF | | | | BJP+ others | | | |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------|------|------|------|
| | 2019 | 2014 | 2009 | 2004 | 2019 | 2014 | 2009 | 2004 | 2019 | 2014 | 2009 | 2004 |
| Ezahas | 28 | 30 | 29 | 22 | 45 | 47 | 59 | 58 | 21 | 23 | 12 | 20 |
| Nair | 35 | 34 | 35 | 29 | 22 | 30 | 28 | 42 | 43 | 36 | 37 | 29 |
| Muslims | 65 | 63 | 71 | 57 | 30 | 21 | 26 | 41 | 2 | 16 | 3 | 2 |
| Christians | 70 | 65 | 70 | 62 | 25 | 27 | 30 | 31 | 2 | 09 | - | - |
| SCs | | | 18 | 17 | | | 71 | 73 | | | 11 | 10 |

Sources: Sajad Ibrahim, 2014: 498.

The UDF and LDF speak about secular democracy, but it is an open secret that both groups always try to follow a specific pattern of caste equation to satisfy all major and influential castes and religious outfits of the state (Biju). Where it is clear that CPM always plays its communal cards in each constituency, the Congress makes a caste-based division. According to Prof. Biju, the UDF follows a winning technique in the Lok

Sabha election “5E-4N-4M-5C-2S”. It denotes five seats for Ezhavas, four for Nairs, four for Muslims, five for Christians and two for SCs/STs. The UDF touches Ezhavas –the influential OBC groups, Upper caste Nairs group, the Muslims and Christians constituted more than fifty per cent of voters in Kerala and also accommodated 10% SCs/STs in the electoral process to ensure victory in the elections. It means they cover all major castes, communities and religions to reach out to every section of voters. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, it was clear that the LDF also followed caste–religious–community composition very seriously. The LDF put “5E-3N-6C-3M-2S”. Even in Christians, the LDF had given separate representation to Syrians 2, Latin Catholic 2, and Marthoma 2.

In the last two Lok Sabha elections we find that caste-oriented politics existed and nourished two major castes in Hindu voters i.e. Nair and Ezhavas and two religious minority voters i.e. Muslim and Christian by the secular parties like Congress or Marxist-leftist. The vote share in Kerala was sharply divided among three major political alliances in the last two 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, which were basically monopolized by UDF and LDF alliances since the 1952 general elections in Kerala. The appearance of the BJP in Kerala politics in 2014 and later in 2019 elections destroyed the traditional alliances of these two groups. Now the Hindu vote bank has been divided into three groups. Accordingly, the vote share of UDF and LDF has been eroded.

From data surveyed by CSDS references given by Prof. Sajad, it is clear that in the 2014 elections. Nair community votes for UDF had decreased by one percent, whereas, the LDF witnessed a heavy loss of 59 % in 2009 to 47% in 2014. This further dropped by 2% in the 2019 election. However, UDF gained one per cent vote in 2019. Whatever, was the loss faced by the ruling party, LDF in both elections, it was ultimately gain for BJP. The ruling Left Front increased its vote share from 28 % in 2009 to 30% in 2014 but faced an 8% loss in the 2019 election. The BJP and alliance vote share went up from 37 % in 2009 to 36% in 2014, but remarkably increased by 7% i.e. 43% in the 2019 election.

The Ezhavas, an influential OBC group also changed the face of UDF by decreasing its support by 2% between the 2014 and 2019 elections. Similarly, LDF also faced the loss of vote share from 59% in 2009 to 47% in 2014 and 45% in 2019 elections. It is a constant shifting of support of vote from the Ezhavas community. But the way BJP gained a vote share from 12% in 2009 to 23 % in 2014 could not be sustained in the 2019 election.

The UDF alliance always received trust votes and support from the Muslim community in Kerala. Perhaps in 2009, UDF got 71% votes, which came down to

63% in 2014 but again increased by 2% more votes in the 2019 election. But, LDF, who shared 26% of votes, had reduced its vote share by 5% in 2014, but increased its vote share by 30%, in 2019 i.e. 9% more than the 2014 election. So far BJP and Muslim vote share is concerned, it is an ever-awaited story. BJP under Narendra Modi NDA would try to gain the trust of the Muslim community. So, NDA leader Shri Modi during the 2014 election campaign had given the slogan “Sab Ka Satha, Sab Ka Vikas “. The NDA received a positive response and got 16% votes from the Muslim community, which was only 3% in the 2009 election. However, during the five years of the Modi regime, it has failed to sustain the trust of the Muslim community and faced a heavy loss in 2019. The BJP-NDA shared only 2% vote. Some incidents of torture of Muslim people by Gau Rakshak, Ghar Wapshi, Triple Talaq, and mobs lynching suspected of Muslims mainly reduced the support of Muslims to BJP.

Like Muslims of Kerala, the Christian minority is also a strong supporter and driving force of UDF to come to power in the Kerala Assembly and represent in the Lok Sabha. Lok Sabha election of the last four terms surveyed, by CSDS –Lokniti shows that 62% to 70% votes were shared by UDF. Especially, in 2014, the UDF got 65 % vote, which was 5% less than the 2009 election. But again, UDF revived the vote share and gained 5% more (70%) votes in 2019. The main loss is witnessed by LDF, the alliance constantly, for the last four general elections, losing vote share from 31 % in 2004 to 25% in the 2019 election. Like Muslim voters, Christian voters are also not worthy of being a vote bank for the BJP alliance. In 2014, BJP-others got 9% votes, but it came down to only 2% in the 2019 election. The reason behind the poor performance of the BJP is not specific. The LDF monopolized the vote share of SCs, who enjoyed 73 % and 71% votes from this community in the 2004 and 2009 elections respectively. However, UDF got 17 % and 18 % in these two elections. The BJP received only 10-11% votes in these elections.

Vote Bank Strategy of BJP and Sangh Parivar

It was a long plan of the Sangh Parivar to conquer the final frontier — Kerala — the tiny rebellious state on the southern tip of India. The state is known as a sliver of land and land of God. The strategy of RSS was to win the hearts of the Hindu majority population of Kerala, who were diverted towards communist irreligious ideology and secular-based Congress policy to woo both Muslim and Christian faiths. While Christians, Muslims and Communists have historically shared political power with parties like the Congress, Muslim League, Kerala Congress and the CPM and CPI, the BJP, the main proponent of Hindutva is recognized as an untouchable and anti-secular

party. The LDF has been in power because, the parties comprise the largest number of Hindu supporters, especially from the sizeable Ezhava/Thiyya caste, an OBC (Other Backward Class) grouping. The BJP 's main objective is and was to share the vote bank of this dominant caste, which was the traditional vote bank of LDF. Similarly, the Nairs, the upper caste estimated to be about 14% of the population of Kerala, are the most powerful community in-game change. The game plan of RSS is to revive the Hindu culture among dominant castes like the Ezhava/Thiyya caste, and Nair community because the Communist ideology has dislodged the religious atmosphere from the political culture of the leftist movements in Kerala. The communists do not believe in gods and religions. According to Marx, religion is like opium, which diverts the progressive minds of people to fight against exploitation and promotes quality and class-based society. Once, a senior Hindu community leader said, the CPM should not forget that “ More than 95% of communists, especially women, also believe in God”. The Sangh Parivar is making an all-out attempt to support them with the BJP. The century-old Nair Service Society, the most powerful organization of the Nair community is the main centre of political force, that played a key role in the Kerala power game in LDF. But BJP's political strategy through RSS and Sangh Parivar is to turn upper caste and OBC votes in favour of them. The unhappy NSS was backing BJP candidates because the left Front was favouring Christian and Muslim groups. The BJP wanted to come close to both Ezhavas, a backward community, having a sizable population and the Nair community a powerful upper caste voter to split the vote bank of LDF and UDF. However, the BJP's closeness and favouring of the Ezhavas community in the election, is making uneasy relations with the Nair group. NSS sources, however, say they fear the BJP is promoting Ezhavas, a backward community that has gradually emerged out of the dark shadow of prolonged oppression. The reason for the suspicion is that BJP is putting up Ezhava candidates in key constituencies, and its alliance with the Bharath Dharma Jana Sena (BDJS) a political party floated by the Communist party.

Further, VHP leader, the late Shri Ashok Singhal, had approached the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP), a non-political Ezhava community organisation in 2010 to give its support to the BJP. Since then, the RSS had been steadily working on its leadership and it finally bore fruit six years later when SNDP launched the BDJS in March 2016 and chose to work with BJP in the coming elections in Kerala. To give due importance to OBC, the most influential community in vote bank politics has somehow. Created a suspicion of the NSS leaders when the BJP-BDJS tied up in elections to get an advantage. The leaders of NSS, worry that the RSS is silently taking

over the NSS at the grassroots. The President of a local NSS unit in central Kerala says that about 85% of young members in his area are BJP workers which worries them.

Religion- Caste politics is a reality in state politics

In Kerala other than SCs and STs, all other categories of communities stand with their powerful communal organization as tools to safeguard their respective community interests. The Nair Service Society (NSS), and Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) are non-political organizations of Nair Community and Ezhava community respectively. Several Muslim organizations, Christian Church-Syrian and Catholic are working as forces in every community. This bourgeoisie attitude has been the hallmark of the numerous communal organizations in Kerala. There are more communal organizations than the number of castes and sub-castes in Kerala. Sizeable sections of Malayalees have been voting for their castes. However, the secularization process that started with the progressive and literary movements could not subdue the inherent communal upper hand in the Malayalee society, especially at the time of the electoral process in the state.

Intra-Party Rivalry in State Politics and Unstable Governments

In most of the period in Kerala state politics and government, people have witnessed intra-party rivalry and leg-pulling games to get power. The unfortunate thing in Kerala politics was that the first EMS-led Communist government fell down prematurely. The next government was formed by three parties, headed by the Chief Minister from the Proja Socialist Party, Shri Pattom A Thanu Pillai. The portfolios were shared by Congress and the Muslim league to oust EMS led Communist party from power. It was so mysterious and undemocratic that in that election, the Congress had 63 members and PSP had only 20. But the Congress left the CM post to the PSP partner. As a result within one year, the Congress leaders Shri R Sankar and Shri PT Chacko groups pulled down the PSP-led government and formed a government led by R Sankar. In the 1967 elections, again EMS formed the government with a comfortable majority of seven parties, but internal dissensions and mismanagement fell down the government within two years. Shri C A Menan from CPI formed the mini-front but could not complete the full term due to internal conflict within the front. Again for the second time, Shri Menan formed the government with the help of RSP, IUML, PSP and outside support of Congress. It was the first occasion, the CPI-led government completed its full term.

The people of Kerala had gone through a nightmare and uncertainty in state leadership for the post of Chief Minister. From 1977 to 1982. People saw six CMs for the state. Shri K Karunakaran tested the Chief Minister chair for one month followed by Shri A K Antony for seventeen months. It was like a musical chair. Shri P K Vasudevan Nair's tenure was for twelve months and Shri C H Md. Koya held the post for two months. Four Chief Ministers were changed by the Congress party and were given a chance to all three religious groups to find a better option and settle the fraction within the party and leadership in Kerala. In Kerala politics, minority party leaders like CA Menan and PK V Nair became CMs in the UDF Ministry although both of them belonged to the CPI and Shri Md. Koya, from IUML, became CM under the UDF alliance. However, the State had to witness the fall of four governments during the next three years due to feuds within Congress and rivalry between the coalition partners (Jose, 2004: 76).

The mid-term elections in 1980, couldn't find any solution for a stable government, though the LF led by CPM won the majority seats and Shri E K Nayanar formed the government. Again due to internal rivalry within the alliance twenty months twenty-month-old government fell. Meanwhile, the UDF-led government headed by K Karunakaran from the Congress party formed the government. Shri Karunakaran completed the rest years and again led the second innings for full term. There were three more elections witnessed by Kerala voters in which the LDF and UDF fought each other and formed the government by turn. According to Shri Jose, the elections from 1970 to 1982 had shown unprincipled alliances between parties and factions which were ideologically poles apart. An examination of the political programs and the class character of the political parties on the two fronts will show that the polarization achieved is not ideological, it is only political and game politics. Both UDF and LDF today include secular and communal parties". (Jose, 2004: 76)

The LDF led by CPM shared the state powers sometimes with the Muslim League (IUML), KC(J) and JD. The first one has a Muslim tag—a long-time partner of Congress and the last two partners are not considered proletariat in outlook. Similarly, in the 1987 elections, CPM projected Smt. K R Gowriamma as CM face, but after the elections were over the party re-elected E K Nayanar as CM. During the K Karunakaran regime, the Antony group also tried to put their existence and dictation over CM's decision. In 1995, Shri Karunakaran was compelled to hand over power to A K Antony, the leader of the strongest anti-Karunakaran faction in the party one year before the completion of his tenure (Biswas and Bannerjee, 2023: 98-99). During these short tenures, both the UDF and LDF faced leadership crises. From 2006 to 2019, two CMs served full

terms and the present CM hopefully will complete his tenure. The inside rivalry among party leaders in Kerala politics was the main weakness to showed instability for a long time.

The state of Kerala has come with a strong Marxist ideology. Though first the Communist Government was formed by EMS for a short period, from 1957 to 1977, the state experienced 23 times changes of Chief Ministers. Out of these 23 times, Shri C Achutha Menon served from 1969 – 1977. Shri K Karunakaran 1981-1987. Shri EK Nayanar 1987-1991. Shri K Karunakaran 1991-1995. Shri EK Nayanar 1987-1996-2001. Shri VS Achuthanandan 2006-2011, Shri Oomamen Chandy 2011-2016 and Shri Pinarayi Vijayan 2016-2019 completed their five-year tenure as Chief Ministers. From 1957-1970, five times CMs were changed. From 1977-1987, seven CMs served for short periods. From 1987-2006, two CMs served successfully their full tenures.

Conclusion

Both Congress-led UDF and CPM leads LDF are equally strong. Both alliances have their fixed vote banks with slight changes over time. Both alliances strongly believe in the caste–community and religion-based vote bank equation, which they applied at the time of State as well as Lok Sabha elections. Both alliances are advocates of secular and pure democratic parties, who are very careful to safeguard the true secular image of Indian society(?).

The entry of the BJP as the third force was a back plan of the Sangh Parivar to conquer the final frontier — Kerala — the tiny rebellious state on the southern tip of India. The strategy of RSS is and was to win the hearts of the Hindu majority population of Kerala, who were diverted towards communist irreligious ideology and secular (?) based Congress policy to woo both Muslim and Christian faiths.

The triumph majority of LDF in the 2021 elections under the leadership of Pinarya Vijayan and the return of power has dismissed all speculation of anti-incumbency factors in Kerala. Neither the Congress-led UDF nor BJP has had any success against LDF to make a victory. The Congress is now the weakest party to lead national politics as well as state politics. Secondly; the BJP's preparation in the state with the hope to woo the Hindu votes in favour of the party could not give a result in the recent election. The BJP could not win a single seat from the state.

Recommendation: The BJP as a national and ruling party at the centre must utilize its organizational strategy to work out at every level. The Hindu SCs& STs as well as OBCs are the main force for the BJP, so the party has a stupendous task to unite

them under one umbrella and use its strength as a vote bank in elections. In the race of power politics, steps need to be taken against foreign electoral intervention which weakens our national unity, and communal harmony and destroys our social fabric.

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