



Christian support for BJP is happening organically, mostly. It is also the result of the hard work of thousands of our karyakartas

'ASK ANYBODY IN KERALA, HE WILL SAY MODI IS COMING BACK'

IT has been seven months since you were placed in charge of BJP in Kerala. What are your impressions? The first impression is that Kerala deserves much better than LDF and UDF. Both fronts are averse to wealth creators. So, there is no progress in the state. All educated youth in Kerala are going to other states and foreign countries in search of jobs. It is badly in need of a drastic change and that will happen in 2024.

But UDF had won 19 seats in 2019. What has changed since then?

UDF got that many seats because of two reasons. Primarily because people were angry with Communists because of the Sabarimala issue. Secondly, they also thought that Rahul Gandhi will become prime minister. After 2019, people realised that Modi is here to stay. So in 2024, the scene is going to be totally different. Ask anybody in Kerala, he will say Modi is coming back. The whole nation is confident about the result. Kerala also will change its voting pattern. The BJP has been getting around 15% of votes in elections. We need to increase that to 25% to start winning.

How are you going to achieve that transition from 15% to 25%?

We have done surveys and there are many reports. Prime Minister Modi's approval rate is nearly 40%. Modi doesn't discriminate, not with any state nor with religion, caste, or sex. People adore Modi. Now our job is to convert Modi approval into BJP approval.

So, you are banking on the Modi factor to bridge that gap.

Modi is BJP. He is implementing the BJP philosophy of empowering the poor. He is not giving alms but is empowering people for real.



There's no comparison between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan

You have one of the toughest assignments in hand... which is to capture Kerala. This is my 10th state (chuckles).

But Kerala is unlike any other state. It is one state where BJP hasn't been able to make any inroads...

Every state is different... comes with different opportunities and different challenges. Here, I see a wonderful opportunity where we can take a really long leap.

There may be opportunities... But what are the major stumbling blocks before BJP? See... we are here to defeat the handicaps.

The question is what are those handicaps...

That Kerala has only had bipolar politics for a long time is one. Both fronts have a strong organisational setup and a support base. We don't underestimate them. But now there are opportunities due to Modi's good governance.

Kerala also has two powerful minority communities. Do you think they are stopping BJP?

No. They are our opportunity now. Our karyakartas visited

one lakh fifty thousand Christian homes and everywhere they were welcomed warmly. On Eid, we will be visiting the houses of our Muslim brethren to wish them. Neither BJP nor Modi discriminates between communities. All Indians are one and all are equal.

From what you said, it is very clear that BJP has a tailor-made strategy for Kerala...

This is not about winning votes but winning hearts...

Dialogues

But we don't see this strategy in other states...

No no. We have the same strategy all over the country. Here the number of minorities is very large. Therefore it gets noticed. We have always been a 'nation first' party, not a religious party. Development, development, and more development are the only agenda. Also, taking everybody along is our motto.

BJP lacks the winnability factor here. People will vote for BJP only if there is a winning possibility...

That will happen. The election is only next May. (chuckles)

Who is BJP's number one enemy in Kerala? Congress or CPM?

LDF and UDF are two sides of the same coin.

But elections are like a war. It is important to identify your enemy...

Both are our enemies because both have failed to give what Kerala deserves. Also, we don't use the term enemy. We prefer the term political opponent.

But you can't fight with all, right?

There are not many... Only two are there. And we will defeat both.

You sound very confident...

Yes. I have said we will win at least 5 seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha election and we will win the 2026 assembly elections.

We get a feeling of deja vu... BJP state president K Surendran had said BJP will win 35 seats in the last assembly election.

That is OK. But now I am saying this. You are interviewing me.

Which are the five seats that you have identified?

That I will not tell. The basic strategy is not to reveal everything.

In 2019, Keralites voted for UDF, because, in your words, they were tired of the Communists. In 2021, they preferred the LDF. Still they did not vote for BJP...

The BJP moment in Kerala is in 2024. In 2019, Keralites thought that Modi was a one-time wonder and that he would go. But now people have realised the contributions of PM Modi and his government.

But ground realities are different... Muslims make up nearly 28% here. They will never vote for Modi...

Who said that? That is just a false perception LDF and UDF have created. People, including Christians and Muslims, have realised what Modi is doing for them. He is giving benefits to Keralites though it has not elected a single BJP MP. We want to make *Ek Bharat, Sreshth Bharat*.

Still winning Kerala in 2026 sounds too ambitious...

In Northeast we were nowhere. I was in charge of Manipur in 2012 and 2017. We had only 3% vote share in 2012. In 2017, we got 33% and we came into power. In 2022, we again came into power. In Kerala, we are at least 15%.



Prakash Javadekar, BJP's prabhari for Kerala, has a tough job in hand — to capture Kerala, a state which has till now rejected all overtures from the party. Javadekar, a former HRD minister, who spends at least 10 days a month in Kerala these days, is determined to make that happen. He talks to *TNIE* about BJP's plans for the state, its new-found equation with Christians, and how 2024 will be a turning point for the party. Excerpts:

BJP winning the Northeast is indeed a curious case. How did you make that possible?

We, in Sangh Parivar, are emotionally attached to the Northeast. We always felt this part of India has remained neglected under Congress rule. But Modi insisted that every minister in his cabinet should spend at least 2 days in Northeastern states every month. Imagine 80 ministers spending 160 days in 8 states. What an impact that would be... We brought in development and now there is peace and Northeast is thriving. So people trusted us. We achieved it through hard work. We won their trust not through gimmicks or spreading hatred or false propaganda.

In Kerala, there is a tendency of Congress and CPM voters coming together whenever BJP has a winning chance...

That's correct. Congress and CPM are together even in corruption. Even in Brahmapuram corruption, sons and sons-in-law of Congress and CPM leaders are hand in glove.

The question is how BJP will overcome this... People have realised this. They will reject both.

Kerala has one of the best social indicators in the whole country...better than any BJP-ruled state. So you tell us a reason why a Malayalee should vote for BJP? Because UDF and LDF have made Kerala poorer. There is no industry here... no jobs here. More importantly, Modi, despite not getting any seats, has given justice to Kerala.

It is a fact that the Modi



magic worked and is still working. But after Modi, what?

My answer to such questions is that if I answer all the questions of the next 20 years, what will you ask me when we meet next time?

There are rumours that Modi will be contesting from Kerala...

One thing I can say is that PM is coming to Kerala on April 24. (chuckles)

One can see that BJP is making inroads into the Chris-



tian community...But that also has brought back into discussion what Golwalkar wrote about Christians in *Vicharadhara*... What do you have to say about those scathing remarks about Christians?

Our philosophy is only one — that India is one country, that we are one people. Right from Jan Sangh, this has been our philosophy.

So you do not agree with what Golwalkar said about

Christians? RSS Sarsangchalak Mohan Bhagwat has made the views very clear about all these in 2018. That is our position. You can do research.

But it will be better if as Kerala *Prabhari* you make the position clear...

No, I will not. You also have to do your homework (chuckles)

One can see that the Christian community has started opening up towards BJP. Is it because of the work you have done or is it happening



organically? It is happening organically, mostly. It is also the result of the hard work of thousands of our karyakartas.

Cardinal George Alencherry, while talking to us last week, said that the time when people would vote as per the dictates of bishops is passe. People in Kerala are very conscious, politically... Good that you accepted it. That is a good thing.

So you also agree that what bishops say need not matter when it comes to elections? No... no... I have not said that. They are the guide, friend and philosopher for the common man. So what they say also matters a lot.

You expect top leaders from other parties to join BJP? There are many intelligent leaders in both combinations and they will take the correct

decision at the appropriate time. Just wait and see (chuckles).

So you are in talks? People decide for themselves. We don't go after anyone. They will come.

If outsiders come and get plump posts, what about the ordinary BJP workers who have been toiling for all these years...

Kerala is one state where we have not got success. In TN, we have 4 MLAs. In all other states, we have representatives. So what our karyakartas want is Kerala to be ruled by BJP.

There are rumours that BJP is in talks with Shashi Tharoor...

That is news to me. You can ask that question to him.

We did. The answer he gave was that he has many options before him... Then you must print that (chuckles).

Is it that you don't want to reveal more?

Yes. Let's leave it there... (chuckles).

The BJP government is now being accused of erasing Mughal history from school textbooks. Is it that easy to erase the contributions of the Mughals to our composite culture, arts, and tradition?

I was HRD minister once. We made 200 changes to the NCERT textbooks in 2017. There was no picture of Shivaji Maharaj. Also, there was no mention of the Paika rebellion. We added all that...

Adding is fine, but erasing is different...

History must instill pride in our country's culture and tradition. Every country is doing that.

You still haven't answered our question about erasing Mughal history...

It is basically an academicians' job. They decide as per the requirement of the time. Congress also used to do the same.

Are you insisting that there is nothing political about it?

Absolutely.

But as an individual, don't you think Indian students should learn about Mughal history?

You first read the new history textbooks from Classes 8 to 12. Then you call me...we will discuss it.

Rahul Gandhi was in Wayanad the other day... He said regardless of his disqualification, he would continue to represent Wayanad.

The same way he represented Amethi? You visit Amethi and see for yourself what he has done to the constituency. They took it as a birthright and did nothing for the constituency.

Was there a hurry in disqualifying him?

Everything is done legally.

Earlier, BJP used to take Rahul Gandhi very lightly. You used to call him 'Pappu'...

No never. None of us have ever called him Pappu.

May not be top leaders... but that was how he was being addressed...

No, never. That is not our culture.

We get a feeling that BJP has started taking him a bit more seriously these days... We always take all parties and their leaders seriously.

BJP, till recently, has been campaigning in Kerala saying that both LDF and UDF try to appease minorities. But BJP is doing the same now...

No...no. We believe in equal treatment for all. Both LDF and UDF are corrupt. People are keen for a third alternative.

Congress alleges that there is some understanding between BJP and CPM...

And what does CPM allege? (chuckles) Actually, they are the allies. They are together in corruption and election.

But PM Narendra Modi sanctions whatever Pinarayi Vijayan asks...

Because he wants to develop the whole of country. He gives the same treatment to all CMs. He doesn't differentiate. He takes everybody along.

Some people call Pinarayi Vijayan 'mundudutha Modi'. That he is Kerala's version of Narendra Modi. What do you think?

No. There's no comparison at all. I don't want to bad mouth.

Are you looking for more allies in Kerala?

Let us see.

There has been a vilification campaign against Kerala by BJP leaders. For example in Karnataka, your party's leaders say, 'look at Kerala ...don't let that happen here.'

No...no. We have never done that.



The BJP moment in Kerala is in 2024. In 2019, Keralites thought Modi was a one-time wonder. But now they have realised that Modi is here to stay

One thing being said about BJP in Kerala is that it does not have that one leader who can catch the imagination of the voters...

Who was our leader in Manipur? Who was our leader in Tripura?

Will we have someone like that here too?

That will happen. The same faces will become acceptable after some time. But for that, the time has to come... *Muhoortham* has to come. Then *shaadi* will happen.

So when is the *shaadi* happening?

In 2026 (chuckles).

Kerala is one state where RSS has the largest number of shakhas. But it never translated into votes. What were the reasons? Now is the time. And we will deliver.

You sound very optimistic...

I am optimistic, always. (chuckles).

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