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KERALA POLITICS and BJP's Role.

For those who are interested in Kerala politics, specifically BJP's stance and chances, I am transcribing a Youtube Q&A with @surendranbjp BJP president, Kerala.

A vibrant and savvy politician, KS is the leader Kerala BJP supporters asked for.

He is an extremely sharp strategist who leads from the front - someone who sees the dance from the balcony and also perfects nuances on the floor.

This interview reflects his acumen, clarity of thoughts and candid approach to politics. A no-nonsense leader, he says a lot.

1. How is BJP aligning with RSS in Kerala?

BJP and RSS relationship is that of ideology and political outfit (I have discussed this in detail in a previous thread and KS's view supports my points) and is strong currently.

Covid relief work has brought us even closer.

2. Accusation is that BJP does Hindu politics. But UDF (INC+++) has Ms League (IUML) and Kerala Congress (Xs) - in touch with their spiritual leaders - both INC and LDF do this.

But BJP doesn't do this. Why?

BJP does not need to do this as Kerala Hindus perceive BJP as their own, and at the moment we are basing on the Hindu support.

But we are open to minority support as well. Hindu movement is stronger, not sure how far UDF have understood this.

I am looking at Hindu consolidation post Shabarimala.

In 2019, UDF got this support, but lost two sitting assembly constituencies in the bye elections, because they couldn't retain this support.

But UDF doesn't seem to notice the change in wind.

15000 Hindu temples renovated. This is what we do.

About 15 years ago, Shabarimala wouldn't have been an issue. So, the social psyche is changing in Kerala.

LDF is trying to be pro-Hindu, which shows they have realised what they are losing.

3. BJP has some pockets where they could try and win. But do you believe BJP can win only with the help of minorities?

No, I don't think so. Its relevant only when BJP has about 25% vote base. At present we are at 16.5%. In 4 LS constituencies, we got 30% vote, 25% in another.

These 5 are winning constituencies.

We want this to reach out to all assembly constituencies.

There are 80 of the 140 assembly constituencies which are Hindu majority. Hindus should believe in winnability, then they will consolidate

(This point I have raised in the past)

4. But BJP seems to focus on Hindu minority areas like Palakkad, Bepur?

Things have changed here. Local elections will show the difference.

BJP will have better support than UDF and LDF.

Both fronts cannot win central Kerala and central Travancore without minority votes.

BJP got lakhs of votes in some of these constituencies without forming alliances. On our own.

In 4 districts, most important party is BJP.

There are constituencies were Congress wouldn't get more than a few thousands. Without ML and Xs outfits, Congress is a non-entity there.

For LDF, their biggest influence is on OBC/Dalit.

That is the base that they are losing now.

The ideological defeat through smuggling and corruption have broken this strong cadre.

This base is slowly shifting to BJP now.

(Shashikala teacher is a main factor here)

5. What is BJP's aim? Hindu, Xs, Ms or Secular vote?

Hindu vote. We will also need support of minorities. We may have won a few constituencies with an extra percentage.

I don't believe Ms will vote for BJP all of a sudden.

But there has been a change of heart for Xs communities.

I do have hope due to the community's fear of Ms extremism and L0v3 J!h4t. They also know that Congress is not going to form a govt at the centre.

But we will NOT do any appeasement politics. Our focus is Hindu causes, but will not be against any community.

This is the state's unique issue and we are strong on this. At first, we should build on the trust of our people that we are a winnable force in the state.

6. You say no appeasement, but recently most party positions at the centre are non-Hindus (Alphonse K, AP Abdullakkutty, Tom Vadakkan)

Minority commission is for minorities, so Hindus cannot hold positions there. But BJP Kerala will not bend any of its outlook.

However, these appointments are not in consideration of the state alone. There are other larger reasons for these appointments.

Money flow is affected for Semitic religious conversions after Modi govt has come.

Because of demonetisation, hawala is affected.

This is why there is a surge in gold smuggling.

Conversion is also affected.

But these are at the top level, Xs as community think differently.

They are now supporting BJP

(There is a pro-nationalistic voluntary rise of Xs support for BJP in Kerala)

7. In Kerala, J!h4t takes various forms. L0v3 J!h4t, land J (as called out by communist leader VS Achuthanandan), intellectual J - movie, media etc. How do you combat these?

Kerala is in a dangerous situation. J!h4tists have come together with communists. There is nexus.

Intellectuals in LDF and their ideological support have helped Js to get a grip in these spheres. Victim mentality. So, BJP's approach is to oppose both, as one entity.

All Sangh parivar voices have raised a lot of spiritual awareness.

There is a huge surge in going to ashrams and matts - never before. Also, preservation of temples.

This is why PV tried Police Act amendment.

MSM can be bought, which is what they did. MSM received 2 - 3 cr so that they write in support of the govt.

JNU products influence is reducing in the literature, cultural and social areas.

8. LDF is able to succeed in teasing BJP leaders, and create an image of BJP as a laughing stock. How do you fight that?

I don't believe all communists do that.

It's a very specific M group which is common to SDPI and communists.

They do an organised attack against BJP leaders and Hinduism. Their purpose is to develop and consolidate M vote bank in compensation for the losing Hindu vote base.

We do give back as good as we get.

Now we are doing offensive defence.

Media is against us. I told media that if they don't give support, we will get our own support.

So, we don't go just by the media. We try to maintain good relationship, but don't rely only on it them.

9. Kerala media do not want BJP to come to power.

We have gone issue based now after I have taken charge.
This helps in managing media relationship.

No prejudice. We are candid. Even DD has refused to show PM's programme live.

Cont'd

The issue is that the bureaucracy is old SFI/ communists. Very difficult to change.

10. Can you say BJP has a place in the mainstream politics today?

Take govt - one MLA, and we are invited as the 11th party in important meetings - although we are governing at the centre.

11th party although in vote share we could be 6th.

But we are the main party on issues. Ordinary public looks for BJP's stance. We have grown to be the main opposition and they follow our take on issues.

After the local body elections, BJP will become an unavoidable force.

11. We say in politics there is no tomorrow, only today. In LS 2019, even with Shabarimala you couldn't gain. Will this change?

Yes. Look at Karnataka - had 4% vote share and 2MLAs, then 9 MLAs, then govt. Today, we have 16% vote share and 1 MLA.

16 to 35% isn't impossible.

12. During this pandemic, a number of corruption issues have emerged in Kerala and UDF, which is the elected opposition is very weak on reacting. How far has BJP succeeded?

We have intervened in every issue and have emerged the actual opposition.

We had unprecedented support from people on our fights on the streets even during Coivd.

Mainly women's support. It shows Kerala public especially women trust only BJP.

13. How come some of these corruption cases not being made big?

All cases cannot be investigated by CBI. All state agencies are under the govt. Their efforts are easily thwarted by the govt.

14. Media say internal issues in BJP. How do you see that?

There is no internal conflicts inside the party. It's not a leader based party.

Such things won't affect the party as it is built of people who have come for the ideology. Election is priority for all.

15. How many seats will you win in the assembly elections next year?

Our aim is to form govt in the state. After Dec 2020, people in Kerala will have the confidence that BJP will form a govt. this will be the game changer.

16. One of VM's indelible marks in Kerala is his achievement in stopping vote trading. What do you want to leave behind?

It's for history to say what I have left behind. But I am not working to leave any mark behind. My term is short - just 3 years.

Within this time, my effort is to form a government. There is opportunity and possibility. I will try my best to advance these.

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Notes: I thank the interviewer for asking the right questions and getting the best value for time.

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This is an independent transcription. I have translated this interview from Malayalam. It's likely that there could be mistakes in understanding and translating.

Please watch the actual video here.

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