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## KERALA POLITICS: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 2021 ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

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### Abstract

Kerala's politics to date has revolved around the Marxist Communist Party LDF and the Congress party. If you look at the political history of Kerala over the last five decades, you can see that these two parties came to power one after the other. Even in the Modi wave of 2014, the BJP could not claim a single seat. Also, if we look at the results of the last three general elections (Lok Sabha), the Congress party has taken the lead in those elections. The Congress party has produced good results in these elections. The people of Kerala have supported the Congress party in national politics' aspect. Former Congress President Shri. Rahul Gandhi has also managed to maintain his presence in the Lok Sabha by winning from Wayanad, Kerala. But in the assembly, the people have given a chance to change. But for the first time in the 2021 Assembly elections, the LDF came to power for the second time in a row under the leadership of Pinarayi Vijayan. UDF did not achieve the expected success. Due to the factionalism and lack of coordination among the leaders of the state and relying only on Rahul Gandhi, the efforts of the Congress leaders in the state fell short. Even the Bharatiya Janata Party could not retain the one seat it won in the last election. The BJP could not get at least E. Sreedharan elected by nominating Metroman E. Sreedharan as the face of the Chief Minister's post. But in the last five years, due to floods, Nipah, Covid-19 and other development works, there was an atmosphere of satisfaction among the people about the Pinarayi Vijayan government. As the result, the LDF has had the opportunity to come to power twice in a row for the first time in five decades.

**Keywords** C.P.M., Indian National Congress, Kerala, Assembly, LDF, UDF, BJP, State politics.

### Introduction

In Kerala, a monolithic legislature is the only assembly that exists. The Kerala Legislative Assembly has 141 members. 140 + 1 means 140 elected and one reserved (nominated) for Anglo-Indian. There are 20 Lok Sabha seats in entire state of Kerala. Therefore, the importance of Kerala in the politics of the country has remained ever. In Kerala, which has the highest literacy rate, the Marxist Communist Party and the Congress have been in power since 1957. There have been governments of the Left and Congress alliances in recent decades. To date, the world's largest political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, has not had much success in electoral politics in Kerala. The BJP had won one seat in the 2016 Kerala Assembly elections but could not retain that seat in the recent 2021 elections. Just as the BJP has tried to gain a foothold in the northeastern states, to some extent it seems to have succeeded in the northeastern states. This is the second time the BJP has come to power in a state like Assam. But in a State like Kerala, which has the most literate, most Hindu community, the BJP has not been able to increase its strength. The people of Kerala have cultural, ideological diversity, the people of Kerala are everywhere in the world due to educational progress. We always see a difference in the politics of the southern states. The influence of regional parties, local issues in politics, apathy about language, culture, etc., make the southern states different in Indian politics. However, in the politics of the state of Kerala, there are small and big parties, including the Indian National Congress, The Marxist communist Party and the BJP. There are the fronts (alliances) under the leadership of the Marxist Communist party LDF (Left Democratic Front) and the Indian National Congress UDF (United Democratic Front). The dominance of these two fronts is evident in the politics of the state of Kerala. In the 2021 Lok Sabha elections, the then Congress president Rahul Gandhi won from wayanad in Kerala and is representing Wayanad. He could not maintain the traditional constituency of Amethi. Rahul Gandhi has an influence



on the Congress people of Kerala. State Congress relied heavily on Rahul Gandhi in the Assembly elections due to his influence on Kerala politics. But it did not have much effect on the election results. The present article provides an analytical study of the politics of state, recent elections and the re-elected state government under the leadership of Mr. Pinarayi Vijayan.

### **Commitment of thoughts**

Kerala, known as the land of gods, is a culturally and religiously enthusiastic state. Hindu communities celebrate festivals like Onam for ten days. Kerala's culture is mixed and universal. In the State of Kerala, the British rulers developed education as well as spread religion. Due to this, the numbers of Christians here is large. The churches of the British period are the main feature of Kerala. The beauty of nature has benefited the state and tourism has also developed. It ranks in top in the country in literacy and urbanization.

### **Thought System**

The State of Kerala has the largest number of branches of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The pro-Hindu ideology of the Sangh is spreading here. The BJP's vote share in the state has increased in the last ten to twelve years. The influence of the leftist ideology is highest in the state. So the communists have been influencing the politics of the state for the last several decades. The state has 55% Hindus and 45% Muslims, Christians. And these are all divided into different ideologies.

### **Caste Politics**

Like the rest of the states, Kerala's politics is also influenced by caste and religion. Kerala has given K. R. Narayan and Justice K. G. Balakrishnan as the country's first Dalit President and first Dalit Chief Justice. The state of Kerala is heavily influenced by caste and religion factor. Kerala has a large number of Ezhuva, Nair community as well as SC, ST, OBC, Christian, Muslim, Hindu community. If you look at the last few elections, you will notice that the role of the Ezhuva, Nair, Christian, Muslim community has become important. To this day, the Ezhuva community has stood by the LDF front. And the Muslim community has consistently sided with the UDF and the Congress. The Christian community has remained supportive of the UDF front. The experience of the last few years shows that the Nair community has mainly supported the BJP-led NDA. The SC, OBC community has always supported LDF. Even in an educated state like Kerala, where power is shifting, such politics is not static but is constantly changing. You will notice this by looking at the table below.

Party/ Front	2021		2016	
	Seats	% of votes	Seats	% of votes
UDF	41	39.41	97	38.60
LDF	99	45.28	92	42.58
NDA	–	12.40	01	14.2
Others	–	2.91	–	4.2

**(Reference- Lokniti CSDS poll survey)**

The LDF has won more votes and seats in this election than in the last. The Congress-led front UDF has lost seats but the percentage of votes has remained stable. Compared to that, BJP-led NDA alliance's seats have come down to zero and the votes have also come down. The BJP did not get the expected success in this election. Given the history of the last elections, Congressmen, including the UDF alliance, had hoped that the anti incumbency would benefit the Congress and the UPA alliance and will cause the change of government. But the people of Kerala once again gave a chance to the LDF front, expressing satisfaction over the Shri. Pinarayi Vijayan government. The LDF front has broken the record of the last four decades by coming to power. This election has many conundrums. The LDF won the election, mainly on development issues.

### Analysis of LDF's Success

- **Performance of State Government**

The survey shows that the people are satisfied with the LDF government that came to power five years ago. The public is satisfied with the performance of the LDF government in terms of power supply, drinking water and supply, medical facilities, public transport services, law and order, etc. Notable work in terms of job creation has not been done by the LDF government. Problems such as floods, cyclones, epidemics and the global crisis of Covid-19 have prevented the government from paying much attention to employment. The public has also ignored such issues.

- **Popularity of Mr. Pinarayi Vijayan:**

The government has faced two major floods in the last five years, Nipah and the Covid-19 global epidemic since March 2020. All these crises were overcome very patiently and successfully by the government led by Pinarayi Vijayan. The Kerala pattern has been discussed in many newspapers at the national and international level as a successful pattern in overcoming Covid. This has helped to increase the popularity of the government with the Chief Minister. He has also received significant and valuable support from the Finance Minister and the Health Minister. The government has taken steps to provide relief to the people of Kerala by implementing several welfare schemes in the National Lock Down (Covid-19). Distribution of food kits, grain and essential items were supplied through ration cards. Implemented schemes like community kitchens in all the Panchayat areas of the state.

### Niti Aayog's SDG Index

According to the Niti Aayog's report published by the Nikki Commission's Sustainable Development Goals Index 2020-21 on social, economic, environmental, etc. criteria, the state of Kerala has once again topped the list in the country. Reports like these help shape the image of the government. In this SDG Index, Kerala tops the list in 2019. People in the most literate state like Kerala seem to be wise to form their own opinion about the government.

### Party or Candidate

In this assembly election, the people seem to have voted for the party (front) without seeing the candidate. Out of the general turnout, 61% voted on the basis of party and 29% voted on the basis of candidate. The LDF has succeeded in garnering the support of the Christian and Muslim Communities. In short, the Muslim and Christian communities have sided with the LDF in this election. The majority Hindu votes were divided and further divided among three fronts.

### The CM Candidate

The Congress-led UDF alliance was not able to declare the chief ministerial candidate due to factionalism within the party. Many veteran Congress leaders were in the race for the chief ministership. The NDA-BJP alliance has put forward a clean, core and competent person like E. Sridharan, known as Metro Man, as the face for the Chief Minister's post. But it did not benefit the BJP front. Sridharan, who was contesting in Hindu majority constituency, was defeated by a Muslim Candidate. On this occasion, we got to see the uniqueness of Kerala's politics. Because of politician like Pinarayi Vijayan Left Front retained its power. And that gave him the chance to be the CM once again. Both the Congress and BJP made several allegations of corruption against the Pinarayi Vijayan government. But the people of Kerala once again believed in the Left front.

### Post-Election Politics

After the election results, Pinarayi Vijayan was sworn in as the Chief Minister for the second time. Surprisingly, Pinarayi Vijayan's new cabinet did not include K. K. Shailaja, who was the health minister in the previous government and was elected on record votes. This raised eyebrows of many. Congress MP from Kerala Shashi Tharoor also expressed surprise and praised Mrs. Shailaja's work. Its reason is as follow; K. K. Shailaja has been honored globally for her role as Health Minister in the epidemic of Covid-19 and Nipah. Her work has been glorified at homeland and abroad. Retired teacher Shailaja's

measures taken to control Covid became popular. But the statement from her CPM (I) clarified that not being part of the new cabinet is part of their party's strategy. The new cabinet has given a chance to many new faces. After the election results, the Congress has also tried to end factionalism within the party as it did not get the expected success. The selection of V. D. Satheesan as the Leader of the Opposition has shocked many veteran leaders. With this, the era of Chandy and Chennithala in the Congress came to an end. Munnavalli Ramachandran was removed from responsibility of Pradesh Congress and K. Sudhakarn is appointed as its president. After the elections, the Congress has again made many important changes in the Kerala congress.

The Bharatiya Janata Party is also likely to take steps to make a number of organizational changes in the future. Because of these reasons, the state of Kerala has been shaken by the election and post-election politics. From now on, the BJP will continue to work as usual to re-enter the fray in the near future. Their growth in West Bengal elections from 3 seats to 74 seats suggests that their efforts will continue likewise. The State of Kerala supported the Congress in the 2014 Modi Wave Lok Sabha elections. Once again, the Congress will continue to work for the support of the people of Kerala. There is no doubt that other parties, big and small, including the congress, will try to increase their strength. And this is part of partisan politics. The LDF-led government, however, will have to fulfill its promise. The challenge for LDF-led government is to overcome many of problems in a crisis like Covid is not small. Let's see how the Pinarayi Vijayan government can overcome all this problems.

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