

On BJP's Haryana Win

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Most analysts have, willingly or not, failed to spot that Hindu consolidation was a big factor

Ashwin Sanghi



Kurukshetra – the battleground that witnessed Mahabharat – lies in Haryana. For good reason. The region 'Hari-ayana' is Vishnu's abode, where Krishn preached Bhagavad Gita to Arjun. It was an integral part of Brahmavart, Vedic civilisation's cradle, and a key part of Sarasvati basin, home to rishis including Vyas. The fearsome battle between the Pandavs and Kauravs had far-reaching implications for Bharatvarsh. Not much has changed – including the centrality of faith.

After Haryana's state polls, reasons cited for the result are Congress's overconfidence, infighting, lack of alliances, and poor organisation. Then there's Jat vs

non-Jat dynamics, renewed BJP-RSS relationship, and a formidable last-mile BJP machinery. The one factor not given its due is Hindu consolidation. Is this silence intentional or inadvertent? Or simply too close to an uncomfortable truth that Hindu consolidation has emerged in Haryana?

Counter-polarisation was expected. Wouldn't Congress's efforts to woo Muslims, parallelly accentuating Hindu caste divisions, elicit Newtonian reactions? BJP's failure to have its 'sabka vishwaas' poll plank win Muslim votes in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, and the contrast between its Kashmir Valley and Jammu vote shares, reinforce this view. Why ignore the fact that PM, the UP CM, and RSS chief have all reiterated the theme that 'if votes split, you'll stand divided', in recent weeks, if only in different words?

India has been home to different faiths. They've flourished due to Sanatan dharm's intrinsic spirit of accommodation and acceptance. But they also sprouted within the fractures of Hindu camps. Divide and rule has worked well in India. But many factors are uniting Hindus like never before. These include

recent anti-Hindu activities in Bangladesh, property disputes by Waqf boards, religious conversions, govt control over Hindu temples, politicians' abuse of Sanatan dharm, sanctimonious preaching of USCIRE, and perceived lack of a common civil code. Increased availability of information on all this on social media has amplified the process.

It's essential to recognise the significant shift. The idea of Hindu consolidation is not just political manoeuvre; it reflects a broader cultural resurgence. For decades, caste dynamics dominated the political discourse and will probably continue to do so in years to come. But we're now witnessing greater alignment under the banner of a shared dharmic heritage.

It's easy to dismiss this as Hindutva politics. But a cursory exploration of Veer Savarkar's writings makes it clear Hindutva's a common identity for descendants of Bharat who revere Bharat as their *punyabhumi* and *matrubhumi*. Savarkar's Hindutva was not confined to spiritual or religious beliefs, as it sought to unite people based on ethnic and cultural commonalities. This definition allowed even those who may not strictly adhere to Hindu religious practices – but share same cultural roots – to be considered part of the Hindu fold. Ideologically, Hindutva is a negation of caste. That's why Hindutva terrifies established political hierarchies.

What irks traditional votebank parties is that opponents are carrying the battle to their turf. In a first, hierarchies within Islam and Christianity – faiths supposed to usher the newly converted towards an egalitarian realm – are in discussion. Sanatan dharm holds together diverse faiths, languages, traditions and practices. India's plurality endures due to a civilisational ethos of plurality, not an ill-defined, misunderstood notion of secularism. History bears witness to the fact that flourishing civilisations crumbled when their original culture was lost.

The coming years will be pivotal in deciding whether this trend evolves into a lasting political force or is overshadowed. What remains evident, though, is that Haryana's recent elections serve as a harbinger of the ideological struggle nationwide. What was once Kurukshetra's battle is now waged in the hearts of Indians. Question is: will dharma prevail?

The writer is an author of several works of fiction