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## STUDY ON RISING OF YOGI ADITYANATH AND SURVEY ON PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION ON HIS STYLE OF ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

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### **Abstract**

This article focuses on the present Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Adityanath Yogi, and tries to contrast his political actions with his background as a member of the Shaiva sect of the Nath Yogis. After tracing the recent history of the Gorakhpur monastery he leads, researchers have focused on Adityanath's mode of power. The survey is conducted to know people's perception of the Yogi government, Mentioning his last and often controversial actions and declarations. The survey was conducted in Gorakhpur, UP, and found that people are satisfied and pleased with the functioning and implementation of government policies in the current political landscape. Lastly, people urge to retain the same government in future also.

**Keywords:** Gorakhpur, Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh.

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### **Introduction**

In the 1930s, the current heir of a secularisation movement began with the influential and political mahant Digvijaynath (b.1894, mahant1935-d.1969). This movement constitutes a break with the former Nath Yogi attitude towards worldly power. The Yogis were traditionally well known for their supposedly superhuman powers, their siddhis, which they obtained through Hatha Yoga, rituals, or alchemical practices. However, they often used their reputation as wonder-workers in rather mundane ways to help would-be kings to assert their domination or maintain their temporal supremacy. In exchange, they were granted huge worldly possessions—lands, villages, means to sustain their affluent monasteries. They were kings' counselors, spiritual as well as temporal advisers.

Nevertheless, the 20<sup>th</sup> century ushered in a new configuration in which religious figures entered the political arena. The Gorakhpur heads, from Digvijaynath onwards, understood that to maintain their former level of influence, they had to get involved in the new paradigm of modernity, i.e., development, as embodied by educational and medical institutions. That was an initial move that Gorakhpur math later shared with other Nath Yogi institutions such as the Asthal Bohar monastery (Haryana) (Briggs, 1973). Nevertheless, that was insufficient to implement the ideas dear to Digvijaynath: making India—Bharat—a Hindu Nation. Already involved in politics, even before he was nominated mahant, he managed to turn his status and function into a powerful tool to propagate his vision of India and insert himself

directly into the heart of political action through the electoral game. His two successors followed in his footsteps, but Adityanath further infused politics and religion. He maintains his high status as a religious authority while competing in the Hindu right's political arena, eventually becoming Chief Minister and a key component of Narendra Modi's strategy (Bouillier, 2015). As kings' counselors and wonder-workers, the Nath Yogis competed with their Muslim counterparts, the Sufi religious experts of the Muslim sultans and Moghul princes. Moreover, their rivalry was fed by an undeniable closeness. This proximity was conspicuous in various fields: philosophical quest shared legendary world, literature, science, history.

The Nath Yogis of today claim Gorakhnath as their founder. This saint about whom we have no historical data probably lived in the 12th century and is credited with Sanskrit treatises on Hatha Yoga, the Yoga, which the modern Yoga that has become so popular all over the world partly originates from, and that the Nath Yogis now claim as their tradition. The sect was organized later, late 16th century probably, divided into various branches panth hence the canonical appellation of the sect as Barah Panth is twelve branches. It had a considerable influence in various domains. The yogic philosophy, a vision of the body as a microcosm of the macrocosm, and breath control practices were widely shared with the Sufis. They commented with interest on particular yogic techniques and concepts” (Ernst 2016:280).<sup>4</sup> Texts and teachings were exchanged in places where both kinds of mystics were welcomed, the Sufi dargahs tombs of saints, and the Nath ashrams or maths, monasteries. Indian Sufi romances the Indo-Sufi masnavis combine metaphysical (Bouillier, 2017).

Thus, fluid boundaries and mutual esteem have been the relationships between the Nath Yogis and the Muslims since pre-modern times. The legends surrounding the foundation of Gorakhpur monastery, the hometown of Yogi Adityanath, convey the same message.

### **Review of literature**

The active involvement of the Gorakhpur monastery in the political game started in the second decade of the 20th century. Before that, it seems that the math was relatively important but that its mahants, its heads, were more involved in spiritual matters and left the worldly alone. Everything changed with the mahant Digvijaynath (b.1894-enthronement1935-d.1969). Born to the princely family of Mewaras Rana Nanhu Singh, then orphaned, he was committed by an uncle to the care of the Gorakhpur monastery. He spent his youth studying in a technical college. His genuine interest was politics, and in 1921 he joined the Congress Party but resented its policy of appeasement towards the Muslims. He changed affiliation for the Hindu Mahasabha after having heard Savarkar speak.

As A.K. Banerjea (1979), the prominent philosopher and historian of the math, wrote: When the present Mahant [Digvijaynath] succeeded to the guddee (i.e., gaddi, the throne, the seat of mahant), he found the institution economically in poor condition...the previous Mahants, who were as a rule other-worldly saintly persons, were naturally indifferent to such outer improvements of the institution.

Gambhirnath, "a great Mahayogi who was universally recognized as a perfectly enlightened saint with superhuman Yogi powers and who would almost always remain in a deeply meditative mood with the least part of his consciousness concerned with external affairs"

(Banerjee 1979:16–17), was a prominent figure of the monastery at the turn of the twentieth century.

This love for “Hindu dharma” would be the element that clung close to Savarkar’s ideas and led him in 1937. He was involved in many of Mahasabha’s action movements and movements to liberate the god Ram’s birthplace. He was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1967, an initial move that his two successors would imitate. “He was the Maharana Pratap of his time for the Hindus. His person united the strength of the Brahmin and the Ksatriya” (Mahant Digvijaynath smrti-Granth 1971:176).

The new orientation initiated by Digvijaynath would dominate the following story of the math and the actions of his successors to mahants, Avedyanath, and Adityanath. What is constantly put forward is their Ksatriya or Thakur caste identity and their involvement in defense of Hinduism: their warrior force is for the Hindu dharma (Chaturvedi, 2016).

Avedyanath, born to a Garhwali Ksatriya family, got involved in the Gorakhpur math relatively young. Initiated by Digvijaynath in 1942, he nominated Uttaradhikari, his would-be successor. He followed his guru in the Hindu Mahasabha. In Gorakhpur circumscription, he was elected a member of the UP local assembly five times and four times at the Lok Sabha (Lowe House of the Parliament). His involvement in the Hindutva agenda secured his presidentship of the Ayodhya based movement for the liberation of Ram’s birthplace in 1984 (Chaturvedi, 2019).

Ayodhya, in Uttar Pradesh, and the conflict surrounding the Babri Masjid and the Ram Temple were a constant focus in the Gorakhpur Mahants’ political involvement. When Adityanath was seen and publicized, leading a procession carrying the Ram statue to the temple’s future abode on the same day that Narendra Modi declared the covid-19 lockdown (Chaturvedi, Gallner and Pandey, 2019).

Adityanath is the disciple and successor of Avedyanath, besides being his nephew (on the maternal side). Born in 1972, also to a Garhwali Ksatriya family, he got a very early start in politics, competing in a students’ union election as an independent candidate and later was elected in the 1998 national election on a BJP ticket, being the youngest member in the Lok Sabha. He was repeatedly appointed as the BJP Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in 2017 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi (Jha, 2017).

### **Adityanath’s power characteristics**

One may summarize his behavior and actions with three topics: Ksatriya dominance, the Hindu dimension, the hate for Muslims. The three elements are intertwined and complete Adityanath’s performances and omnipresence plan (especially in the media).

### **The Ksatriya side**

The town of Gorakhpur has been well known for its mafia-style mix of business and politics. According to Chaturvedi, Gellner, and Pandey (2019), the violent confrontation started with a rivalry creating a university. However, “it is widely believed that as long as Avedyanath was at the helm of the GorakPsrainvaatchyMpoatlilhc, there was no interference from the Math side in the local mafia politics nexus”(Chaturvedietal2019).

In 1998, Avedyanath retired from active politics for his disciple and successor Adityanath. Recently elected to the Lok Sabha, very young and ambitious, Adityanath needed to assert his

authority and, true to Gorakhpur's reputation as a place devoted to muscle power. He started by recruiting groups of young people often unemployed but educated and from upper-caste backgrounds, as a sort of private army or militia, the Hindu Yuva Vahini, founded in April 2002 in the aftermath of the Gujarat riots (Kasturi, 2018) (and to avenge the burning of the Sabarmati Express at Godhra). Its headquarters were inside the Gorakhpurmath compound, but the HYV expanded over eastern UP.

Since the public has faith in Gorakh Peeth, HYV members are spread to the village level in various districts. The appeal among youths towards this organization continues to grow because its members are safeguarded from police/administrative action after joining the organization. Due to their association with the organization (Bhardwaj, 2020). This fact was instead accepted since, at first, it was perceived as a valuable tool against previous gangster violence:

This "youth force" has provided Adityanath with the "muscle power" that he needed to establish himself as the region's pre-eminent leader and counteract the power of the mafia dons. Adityanath explicitly took credit for wiping out gangsterism in Gorakhpur in his speech to the Vidhan Sabha following the BJP's election success in 2017. Many local business people prefer the hegemony of Math to that of the gangsters. (Chaturvedi et al. 2019)

Adityanath's Ksatriya style and manner of occupying the math were evident before becoming Chief Minister. He was well informed of all the math's institutions and personally looked over their activities. He often went on inspection tours, always accompanied by armed bodyguards, but back in his office in the monastery, he was very accessible (Singh, 2018).

Every day, at his desk in a long hall, he heard people's demands, most often for academic or medical help. Busy with the phone to resolve problems or summon people, he had the attitude of an influential landlord or politician, holding "a Janta Darbar," a people's court. Administrative and political questions were more often on the agenda than religion (Ali, 2020).

### **The Hindu/Hindutva side**

Before being a local leader, Adityanath is the head of a monastery, a religious figure who belongs to an ascetic community. He likes to put forward his ascetic lifestyle, how he wakes up at dawn, is dedicated to working, and devoted to cows with a visit to a cowshed as the first part of his daily routine.

They were not about the sampradaya and its long tradition, which the new successor would now have to endorse, but rather about Hinduism in general. This is the new turn that started with Digvijayanath and the building of the new Gorakhpur temple: the enrolment of Gorakhnath and the Nath Yogis under the banner of global Hinduism as represented by Sanatan dharma (Jha, 2017).

Suppose the Gorakhpur religious compound includes at its center, as it is the norm in Nath establishments, a Gorakhnath temple with statues of the main Nath Siddhas, a holy fireplace (dhuni), and the tombs of the previous mahants. In that case, it also includes a significant number of smaller shrines devoted to other Hindu deities, in addition to a large temple to Hanuman, and galleries of statues and paintings celebrating the prominent divine and human figures who made the glory of India (Bhatia, 2020).

The printed production of the math also echoes a vision of Hinduism, philosophically more neo-Vedantic than yogic, which overshadows the specific Nath heritage. Moreover, the new world success of Yoga, which Narendra Modi was then eager to promote as a Hindu heritage, is an element that tends to strengthen the inclusion of Nath Yogis into mainstream Hinduism. Moreover, Yoga is included in the solid Hindu nationalist verbal strategy of Adityanath: in 2015, he declared on International Yoga Day: “Those who do not want to practice yoga or the Surya Namaskar should drown themselves into the sea” (Singh 2018).

### **People’s perception towards Adityanath representing BJP**

First, his caste background: himself a Thakur, as we have seen, inheritor of a former gang-like rivalry situation between Thakurs and Brahmans in Gorakhpur, he generally has the support of the Kshatriyas. However, Brahmans also support him because they mostly vote BJP and because of his constant pro-Hindu affirmations. Thus, he has had the support of upper castes.

Nevertheless, Gorakhpur also has a significant population of OBC and Dalits who were ideologically close to the monastery. The Nath sampradaya has never been a bastion of Brahmanic orthodoxy; similar to the Sants' open tradition, Naths are open to a wide range of recruits, and the ascetic denial of life traits prior to initiation may be argued to conceal their allegedly low-caste origins. Whatever the case may be, the Gorakhpur math was considered a place open to all. Moreover, logically OBC and Dalit voted for the monastery, hence Adityanath.<sup>38</sup> The trust they had in the Nath sampradaya is naturally passed on to its monastic leader, whose yogic status carries the weight of illustrious and influential forbearers.

This large base of potential support, which transcends the caste vote bank, gives Adityanath the capacity to enlist all communities, Muslim excepted (which was not the case before Adityanath when Muslims were a vote bank for the math). Hence his co-optation by the BJP represents a high asset to compensate its reputation as a Brahmans' party in context with the rise of BSP and SP in UP.

The Gorakhpur monastery is thus a key element in the BJP's strategy to enlarge its clientele. However, Adityanath is now a leading BJP member. It has not always been the case, and the relationships between the Gorakhpur mahant and the party have had their ups and downs. Adityanath has not always supported the BJP candidate and has sometimes preferred his men, knowing that his Hindu reliable Yuva Vahini network gives him independence.

### **Research Methodology**

The data has been collected from the Gorakhpur district with the help of a questionnaire and online survey. Due to covid-19, it was impossible to contact everyone to take their responses, so the researcher has adopted ways to approach the respondents and collect the data. The structured questionnaire collected the data through convenience and snowball sampling methods. The researcher has selected 850 sample sizes to collect data for inferencing the results.

After reading the literature, consulting with educationists, and consulting with a political specialist, a sample size of 850 people was chosen. Because the response rate for the pilot survey was around 82 percent, the researcher approached 1100 people to collect data to

account for all the differences and outliers. Finally, 876 responses were collected, and after applying data screening and reduction techniques, 734 respondents' responses were selected for final data analysis. Those who have a keen interest in politics or are aware of the state's current economic and financial conditions are approached.

The frequency distribution method is applied to know the perception and responses of the people. It is about the different aspects of the government and its development in the state. Those who were the followers of any party were not considered for data collection. Only those who knew and were neutral and unbiased were selected for the final survey.

The data consists of 63% male respondents and 37% female respondents. The data shows that 65% of the people are graduated and above whereas others have studied higher secondary or more. It was found that 34% of the respondents are self-employed, 36% are working in private organizations, whereas 18% are public servants, and the rest are studying in higher classes above graduation. The data consists of people based on their age; people have aged less than 25 years are the majority in numbers (42%), whereas people between 25 to 45 years of age are 32% in numbers and 26% of people are older than 45 years. The majority of the people live in rural areas, whereas 39% of people belong to urban areas.

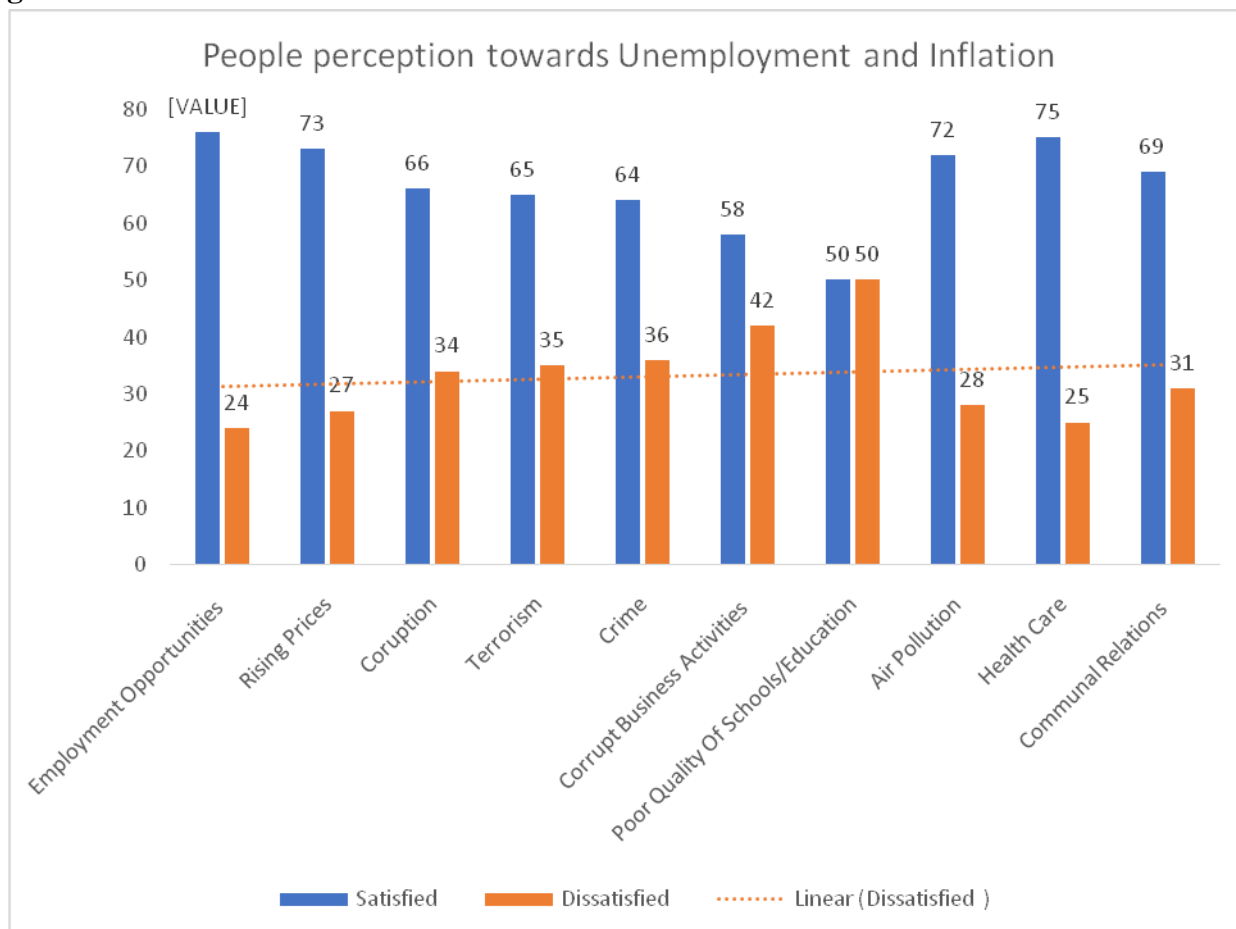
#### **Data analysis**

Table 1 reflects the accurate picture of people's perception of the Yogi government regarding their policies for unemployment and inflation and whether they could curb society's ailments. During public opinion, it has been observed that people are more concerned about employment opportunities. More than 76% of people argued that it is emerging as a big problem in the state. Along with this, health care facilities and inflation are alarming aspects of society. 75% of people are worried about primary health care facilities. However, the Yogi government has contributed to society's betterment during the Pandemic. However, people fear the futuristic conditions of the health care that if there would be no Pandemic, then the health care facilities were not found in satisfactory conditions in the state.

In addition to this, inflation is another issue where 73% of people believe that rising prices are a significant concern for them, and they are not purchasing most of the items due to lack of funds and increasing prices. People perceive their economic and living conditions, which worsen day by day, and they cannot balance their living conditions. One-third of the population is worried about their children's education due to increased fees.

On a positive note, the Yogi government has taken stringent actions to curb terrorism, corruption, and crime. More than the two-third population is satisfied with the law and nature of government policies and actions taken to protect the rights of the individuals. It

**Table 1 People’s perception towards unemployment and inflation during Yogi government**

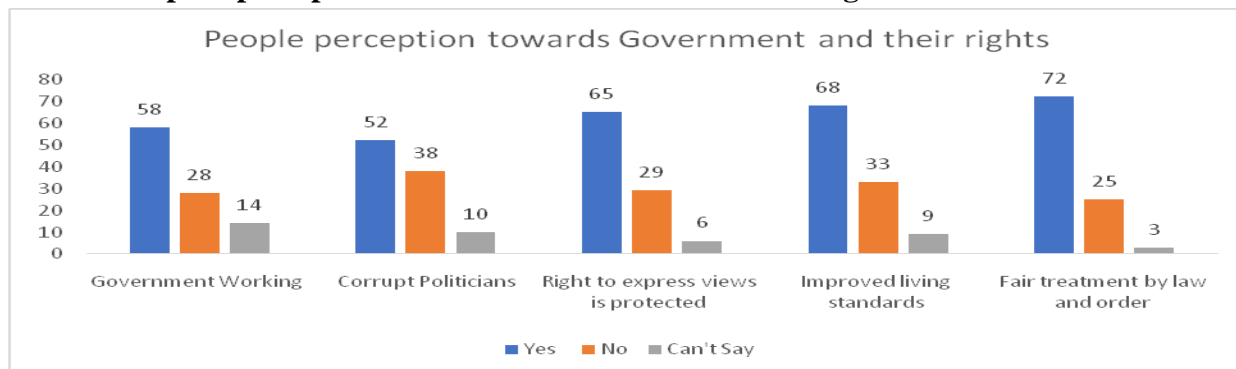


**Source: Primary Data survey**

has been observed that such alarming concerns have been down significantly by more than 23% since 2017. The government has made significant contributions to establishing law and order in the state and protecting citizens from intruders and corrupt authorities.

Table 1 describes that people believe that education and schools have improved but not significantly. Only half of the population is agreed with the improved educational facilities whereas others are contrary to this. People have applauded the Yogi government to reduce air pollution and improve communal relationships among people belonging to different religions. Table 2 represents the perception of people about their constitutional rights in the state. The data reflects that the government is working efficiently in the state. 58% of the people favor efficient government working whereas 28% of the people contrary the notion and 14% people did not criticize government functioning. However, they were not found satisfactory with the government functions. They have not witnessed any significant change in the functioning of government. Half of the population is concerned about political corruption, while 38% are satisfied with the government's selection of lawmakers.

**Table 2 People's perception towards the fulfillment of their rights**

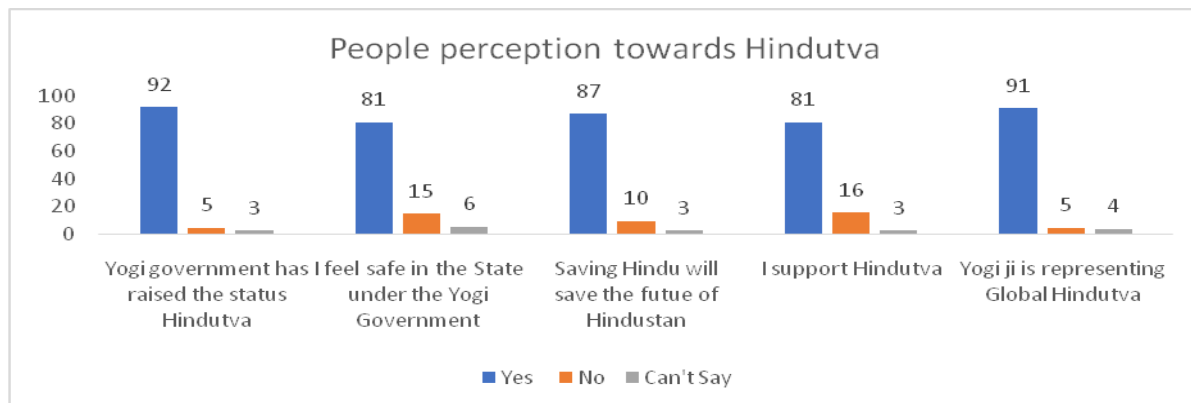


**Source: Primary Data survey**

The table further explains that more than two-thirds of people favor law and government and are happy with the current government that they have the freedom to express their views and liberty in the state. In addition to this, they have witnessed significant improvement in their economic and living standards. Many of the respondents have shown their positivity to express their opinions and improve their livelihoods.

They have further argued that the government has stabilized law and order in the state and has introduced many employment opportunities. It was done to improve the living conditions of people in the state, such as Mukhyamantri Yuva Swarozgar Yojana, National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM), and Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Yojana. In a nutshell, people are happy with the government and believe that it has provided them more liberty to exercise their constitutional rights in the state.

**Table 3 People's perception about the Hindutava concept adopted by the Yogi Government**

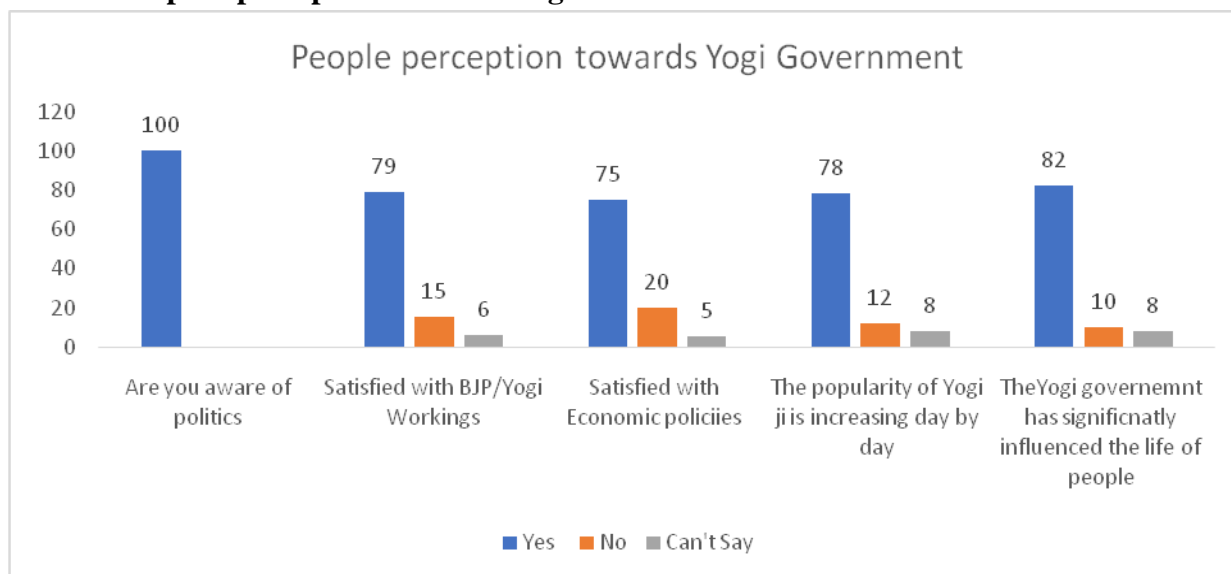


**Source: Primary Data survey**

Table 3 demonstrates people's perceptions about the Hindutava concept formulated by the Yogi government. The majority of the people are happy with the Hindutava notion exercised by the Yogi government. Maximum people have supported the Yogi government to increase patriotic emotions through Hindutava approach. People feel safer in the state compared to the previous government and have contributed many efforts to brand the concept of Hindutava. Many people believe that the Yogi government is not promoting Hindutava in the state and globally. The government has successfully created the Hindutava concept as a recognition of India.



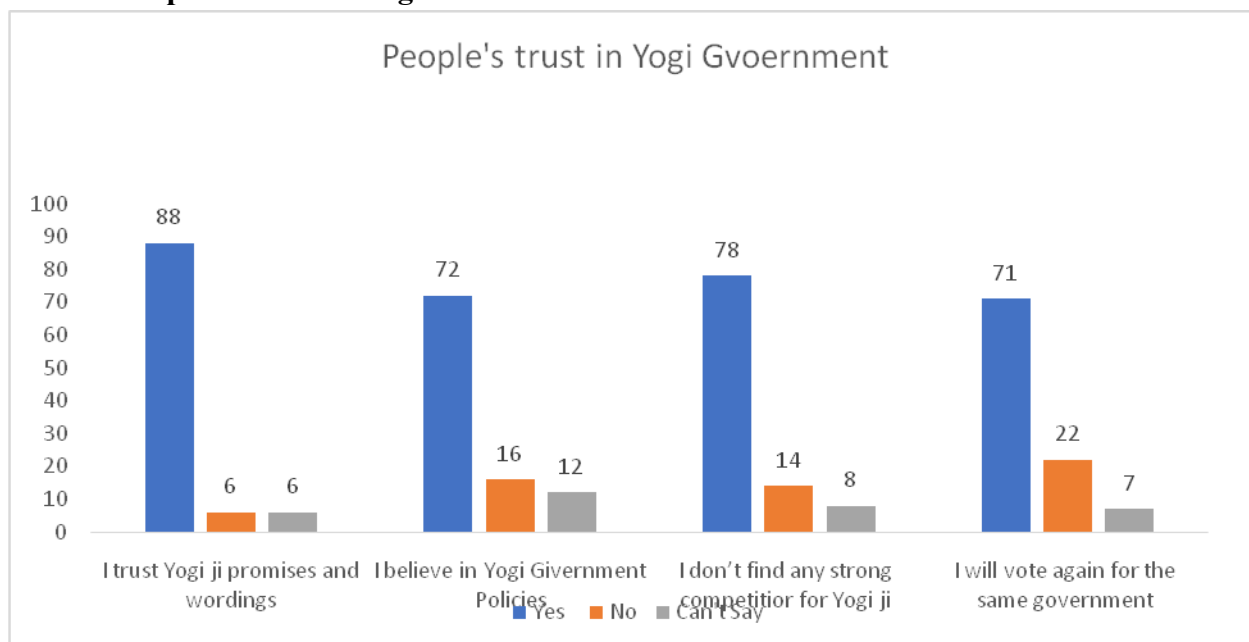
**Table 4 People's perception towards Yogi Government**



**Source: Primary Data survey**

Table 4 highlights people's perception and satisfaction level towards the Yogi government for their functioning in the state. The majority of the people are happy with the government's economic and monetary policies. People believe that the government has implemented many economic and financial policies which have significantly improved the living and economic standards of the people.

**Table 5 People's Trust in Yogi Government**



**Source: Primary Data survey**

Table 5 shows people's trust in the Yogi government, finding favorable attitudes and acceptable behavior for the Yogi government, and their desire to vote for the same administration again. People are more satisfied with the government's overall policies and have more faith in the government's promises. They have seen how the government has kept

the majority of its pledges to date. It is further found that 78% of people perceive that they do not find any strong competitor of Yogi government whereas few believe that the opposition party may claim the seats next time. In a nutshell, people believe that the current government policies are more realistic than documented and implemented successfully. These policies have produced significant results in the state.

**Table 6 Linear regression result for people's perception towards their perception for believing in Yogi government**

| Coefficients |                            |                             |            |       |      |                         |       |
|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------|------|-------------------------|-------|
| Model        |                            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | T     | Sig. | Collinearity Statistics |       |
|              |                            | B                           | Std. Error |       |      | Tolerance               | VIF   |
| 1            | (Constant)                 | 0.057                       | .190       | 1.087 | .278 |                         |       |
|              | Hindutava                  | .419                        | .032       | 2.500 | .013 | .829                    | 1.207 |
|              | Constitutional Rights      | .304                        | .034       | .531  | .596 | .778                    | 1.285 |
|              | Overall Satisfaction       | .114                        | .031       | 1.877 | .061 | .878                    | 1.139 |
|              | Unemployment and Inflation | .212                        | .026       | 1.961 | .050 | .836                    | 1.196 |

a. Dependent Variable: Trustworthy

Source: Primary Data Survey

(Regression equation:  $P = a + bQ + e$ , where P = dependent variable, Q = independent variable, b=coefficient of Q, a = P-intercept / constant and e= error term)

**Table 7 Model summary of the regression model of people's perception towards Yogi government**

| Model Summary |  |                   |          |                   |                            |                   |          |     |     |               |               |
|---------------|--|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------|---------------|
| Model         |  | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |     |     |               | Durbin-Watson |
|               |  |                   |          |                   |                            | R Square Change   | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. F Change |               |
| 1             |  | .572 <sup>a</sup> | .327     | .307              | .42732                     | .327              | 16.112   | 7   | 472 | .000          | 2.098         |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Hindutava, Constitutional Rights, overall satisfaction and Unemployment and inflation

b. Dependent Variable: Trustworthy

Source: Primary Data (SPSS 20.0)

Table 6 represents the results of linear regression applied to examine the impact of factors affecting people's perception of the Yogi government. The results indicate that the trustworthy factor, which represents people's willingness to vote again for the same government, is considered a dependent factor. In contrast, Hindutava, unemployment and inflation, constitutional rights, and overall satisfaction are dependent factors. According to the data in table 6, Hindutava and the freedom to exercise constitutional rights are the most influencing factors. It implies that people are enjoying more extraordinary powers and a sense of belonging to the state and thus want to continue to enjoy their liberty and thus urge to vote for the same government. At the same time, people have shown their dissatisfaction with the

limited number of economic and employment policies and lack of job opportunities in the state. They expect solid and authentic actions from the government to uplift their living standards by providing them good opportunities for longer or permanently.

Table 7 represents the results of people's perception of the Yogi government and indicates that the value of R is 0.572, which implies that the model explains 57.2 percent of the full significance, and the overall model is found significant. However, more factors need to be added to improve the results to draw general inferences. It indicates the positive impact of all the factors on the trustworthy factor, and all the independent factors significantly impact people's trust in the Yogi government.

### **Findings and conclusion**

The survey reveals that people favor the Yogi government due to the implementation of remarkable financial and economic policies, which has uplifted the living and economic conditions of the people in the state. People are satisfied with the establishment of law and order in society and have witnessed more liberty to exercise their constitutional rights than in previous years or governments. People urge that the current government should regain its position in the future also because they believe and trust the functioning and promises of the Yogi government. Yogi government must focus on the education sector and employment generation activities and provide an excellent platform to their people in the state so that migration can be reduced and people could be provided more income generation and employment generation opportunities within the state. The study consists of a few parameters to draw any inferences.

However, looking at the trends, it is certain that BJP will come back to power in the upcoming assembly elections of 2022 with the overwhelming majority under the able leadership of Yogi. Such is the popularity of Yogi and Modi in the State of Uttar Pradesh. People feel safe and sound under the leadership of Yogi.

In contrast, other parameters such as publicity, failure of oppositions, failure of some of the ruling State government/s can be considered to study people's perception of the current government in-depth. It could provide better insights to examine and determine the future of the Yogi government. Moreover, the impact of trust and Hindutava on the result of the next election could be studied, providing more robust results about the people. Lastly, the study is confined to one state only. In contrast, cross-comparison of other states or representation of a large sample may produce more genuine and authentic results to predict the future of the existing government.

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