An authentic leader is a group leader and fulfils the expectations of the group. Typical authentic leaders are true to their selves, personal values and display consistency between their words and deeds generating trust and performance from their followers[1]. However, they can’t be so neutral and open, as the values, words and convictions may do correspond to the democratic ethos and diversity needs,
but it matches with the followers’ expectations and fit into the hegemonised belief system. Neoliberal time is not the same for all the culture, as, for some, it adds to their culture, and for others, it erodes the culture with something forced upon and unpreventable. For example, if we look at the formation of social categories, there are some culture which values independence and freedom of choice and some which value interdependence. In both cases, the idea of intelligence, hard work, development, competitiveness and meritoriousness matters.

The skillfull performance of any community member is a matter of pride for the group, and many members may strive with the same fervour where interdependence matters. In the case of an individualistic culture, competitiveness and individual enhancement is a norm and that what makes their identity. The discourses and way of seeing others thus depend upon people alignment with political ideologies which nurtures the perceptions of societal expectations from the individuals and societal duty for the people. In the present political situation of India, where majoritarian culture supersedes on others, the idea of neoliberalism fit directly with the idea of individualism and meritocracy.

The personality of the leader who resembles the majoritarian Hindu upper caste-middle class thoughts about individual effort, merit and development seen as an authentic leader whose ideological stand resembles the majoritarian prejudices and his action corresponds to their imaginations of nationalism. The representation of the majoritarian viewpoint can be camouflaged as democracy in the lay language but it creates a hurdle to the social change which emanates from the minority view and questioning from their experiences. When leader authentically purports his ideology in action or engage in the ‘politics of doing’, his action symbolizes the action of followers. In the current time of urge to finalize India as a Hindu nation, the effort is made to homogenize the diversity into a singular system and pattern of thought as a collective. For example, Modi in a rally in Mangalore started his speech as:

“AajAisa lag Raha Hai Ki KesariaSamundarLahraRaha Hai.”

“it seems today like a wave of the saffron sea.”

The idea of India imagined and enacted after the independence gives way to the diversity by recognising it and then the idea of nationality was to build up by accepting it as ‘unity in diversity” without divides and prejudices. Here the leaders approach to build a nation on the Brahmanical ideology and populist stance nurtures the nationalism of new kind where the Hindutva revivalist agenda fulfilled. The two necessary platforms on which the authenticity of right-wing leaders in India placed are saving the purity of the Hindu culture and development of India by adopting the neoliberal stance. Since right-wing authority established in India through the working of many groups such as RSS, VHP and some group where Muslims are also the members, the selection of these leaders shows the will of these organisations to fulfil their agenda of Hindu pride and thus Hindu nationalism.

The question is whether Hinduism as ‘way of life or as religion’ empowers Hindutva politics giving it authenticity to define nationalism and diversity? The idea of one nation, one belief, one kind of tolerance has immensely masqueraded the voice of people. The right to dissent and raise voice suppressed through several mechanisms which looks systematic and rational. This normalising of the voices is contrary to the idea of authentic diversity, where the voice of weakest and oppressed raised. The normalising of the nationality suppresses the freedom to express and hence unconstitutional. Even the followers who are the voters too have the feeling due to several informal everyday discussion that they are competent enough to choose their leader who works for their social-emotional and basic
needs. For example, when Modi won the election by the full majority, there was a feeling that a member from their house has become Prime Minister. This can turn into a faulty thinking, as depicted in the form Dunning Kruger effect in the realm of political knowledge (see Anson 2018) where followers due to the saliency of partisan identity feel themselves to be high on political knowledge despite their low political expertise (Fernbach, Rogers, Fox, & Sloman, 2013).

The winning of the current BJP leader as the choice of most of the people in India despite the record of riots and violence in the name of Hindutva shows how the followers reconstructed their anxieties and uncertainties. This resolution committed by selecting their leader who can fulfil their need of Hindu Rashtra, saving of the caste-based social structure, save meritorious people from the reservation, stop immigration, increase economic prosperity (Ache din metaphor), and increase white collar jobs. It is also the case that even these expectations not fulfilled and people deemed to be in a difficult economic situation like the sudden announcement of demonetization, death of lakhs of farmers, lynching in the name of cow vigilantism, the unspoken norm of uncritical acceptance of the government policy, there was unflinching support for the leader. The personality of the leader, in this case, fit into the perception of people as a stable and incontestable (Ajay) leader and conversely nurturing the followers’ collective selves.

The persona of leaders as a mirror image of the followers’ selves, the way followers see themselves as their leader and at the meta-level look at their leader as themselves shows the family resemblance of leader, as a father figure who is both nurturant and task-oriented (see Sinha, 1980). The way an Indian child is nurtured and see his/her role model as a father who is visible as hardworking, value-oriented, preaching, reliable and controlling. The diversity of communities, way of thought and handling the community cultural artefacts has all faced a transformation with the new face where diversity has been overshadowed or schematized in a singular template of neoliberalism of upper middle class. However, this obeisance to the leader is not sufficient as there is also a hidden direction for the leader such as “we selected you and you have to go by us, by our majoritarian self”, so here leader’s authenticity is now an authenticity of the followers. Collectively constructed within the populists’ norms, where the so-called follower defines his self, feel the leader as himself, think himself morally high and think that all his action is authentic because of his choice of the leader who resembles his sensemaking. So, the definition of the leader gets the fundamental shift in the context of Hindutva majoritarian self.

Further questions such as “How political discourses emerge and become ordinary or banal? What are the political discourses in favour of Right Wing and against it? How the discourse shifts and on what basis? Does this shift in the discourse decides the future of any political party and its coming to power? How people form discourse about the personality of the political figure? Is it the party’s, its agenda, the personality of the leader, preference, needs and identity of the people or all? How social identity of leaders get framed by the neoliberal discourses, how leader’s social identity in the right-wing times reconfigured according to the populist notions of right and wrong, authentic and inauthentic? Moreover, further, how political actors use populism to mobilise people and become their authentic leader?

In the comparative debate about the weak and robust leader, voters longed for the strong leader who is self-made and can lead India as a strong nation. Leadership after the Indira Gandhi, look compromising to the foreign policies, symbolic, gullible, not fitting to the masculine expectation of being emerging as a hero. However, these are the stereotypes about the leader quite prevalent in the country which has historically socialised as the victim of foreign rule, and a vision of new India constructed to handle
these forces which are diluting the idea of India. This vision requires a fearless leader who can nurture the idea of new India, uncorrupted, reliable and uncompromising, and fit into the popular imagination.

The metaphorical visualization of the current leader as emerging among the masses, son of the poor, ordinary person, tea-seller (chaiwala), unaristocratic and grounded and inspiration for the common people and metaphorical portrayal of his personality as muscular (56 inches chest or 56 inches kaa seer) added to the common man’s imagination. However, the right-wing mindset has not been shaped by the personality factors only, and it is because of the people geography of thoughts mapped in the cultural framework of masculinity and caste. Though personality factor looks like the property of an individual but shaped in the cultural context, the dominant and economically influential leaders (dabang) are preferred and obeyed, and they provide fuel to the longing Hindutva self and certainty to the rising majoritarian nationalism which is contrary to the idea of India for example as Rabindranath Tagore imagined (see Nandy, 2006)[4]. So, what we see are filtered based on our collective concept about someone as a leader. The leader who represented the majority becomes authentic, and the leaders of the minority who represented the oppressed became inauthentic in the majoritarian regime in India[5].

Since the majoritarian leader is more economically powerful, he has the advantage on the less powerful representatives making them irrelevant to the idea of India as imagined through different traditions of Indian mysticism and poets such as Kabir, Rahim, Music and spirituality and so on[6]. However, these attempts of unity and collective emotions towards the peace dominated by a narcissistic, toxic, noisy and reactionary form of nationalism. As Guduvarthy (2018) opined that the emotions which earlier privately expressed are now expressed publically without any sympathy for the victims of those emotional expressions. Hurling abuses if anyone criticises the government or religious politics or dominance culture, false information about others, mob lynching, has become the norms or we can speculate that the mobilisation and concretisation of the social categories have created this norm of intolerance and dehumanisation. One aspect of an authentic leader with whom the idea of India and development firmly attached can be the personality which matters when we talk about authentic leadership. The evidence that even the leader who has not fulfilled the promise to the nations but aligns with dominant identities was considered as authentic among the ruling class of the society. This image of being a ruling class has derailed the notion of peace, and the urgent desire to be a masculine nation has flared up with the signifier leader considered as authentic. Here the authentic leadership representing the Hindutva ideology made the people feel victimised and cheated under the leadership of Congress and other minority parties and then employed himself as a real saviour from the shackles of terrorism and poverty which that weak leadership could not solve. For example,

“Terrorists, Pakistan wants me to lose, opposition to win”… “Congress leaders in their hatred for Modi had stopped looking at national interest” (Modi at a rally in Meerut). So, the dominant identities had the feeling of being the victim, and psychologically; this encouraged the politics of hatred towards the minorities visualised as a historical repressor, dominant and anti-Indian. Since the rise of the right wing is due to mobilisation of Hindutva politics at the large scale, when compared to previous times the only difference was its lesser support of middle classes which intensified in the coming time and fuelled the imagination of being in the middle class.

The leadership and mobilisation of right-wing politics are creating a false image of the nation and eroding the memory which transmitted to the posterity of peace, solidarity and empathy. Since the leadership gave the deep-seated religion and caste identity direction, it is same a dormant volcano
which sometimes erupts unstoppable. The agenda here is to question the authenticity of the authentic leader in terms of what they do and don’t do? Maybe for the typical ideologues and nationalist’s making bridge or refurbishing temple is doing something for the nation and they may also infer it some social change and for them, a leader who impinges their demands are the authentic leader. What about leaders who are with the tribal and oppressed classes and they are resisting the idea of development which is contrary to their community, for example cutting of trees and eroding of old villages, for making any unnecessary bridge, considered as a toxic leader by the dominant classes? How toxic leadership and authentic leadership connects in the current political regime of India? Where are the people? What are the people interests and needs and who in real sense is taken care of by the leader? What are the fundamental requirements of people and the environment which matters most rather than surface level show off like constructing some statue (which denotes the identity of the dominant classes rather than oppressed classes), purification and modernization of rivers, policing of the universities, keeping checks on critical scholars and books, social media interventions and rising trolls? In what way any leader who challenges the preserved memories becomes stigmatised by the dominant society (see Peter Burke)[7]? Why prejudice towards the leader who represents the identity of minorities, and oppressed classes pronounced, and their leadership considered as inauthentic? The discursive practices and dialogues among the leaders and followers of the oppressed group eroded by the dominant discourses of oppressive classes and castes.

The scenario of the recent rise of right-wing leader and his open remarks overshadowed the remarks made by the leaders of the oppressed group. The followers from the historically oppressed groups were also influenced by the dominant right-wing leader’s personality and his ideology despite their experience of continued dominance from the right wing group. The recent campaigns like “Main Bhi Chowkidar” metaphorically signified the rise of vigilantism towards the critiques, radicals and extremists, which played a massive role in the winning of Modi as a leader[8]. The earlier portrayal of oneself as a role model of poor through the populist discourse of anti-elitism against the previous elitist leaders through the “chaiwala” metaphors. Even the tea seller in BJP could elevate to the higher position unlikely the confinement of other parties to their elitist leaders. These very assertions of his place among the masses, Modi constructed himself as an authentic leader as a true representative of the people and who has the grit to go by his promises. Thus the emergence of two different situations, one against the poverty and for development and the other building keen new India in safe hands against the Islamic terrorism and Maoism worked as a turning point in the history of Hindutva politics. In between, there were loss of lives, unemployment, demonetization menace, farmers suicide, terror of right-wing groups, normalcy and hegemony of powerful voices which eroded from the memory of people through speeches, terror events (e.g. Pulwama attack), increase in hate-based crime[9] and the security metaphors. Sometime historian creates or represents the past as truth to suit their political agendas, and any representative of outgroup who counters question them labelled as anti-national and working against the national interest which based on some preserved memories which created some identity as being a citizen of the nation. So, the creation of rich Hindu past by directing history through the deed of a great man and neglecting the subaltern history in between such as the history of tribal, lower castes, Dalit women, they have created a new present filled with the illusions of greatness and karma.

The new vision of India induced into the memory of people where the leader is visualised as an authentic, doing development, and a good time is approaching. Even the riots of Gujrat with evidence of the involvement of Hindutva leaders, the killings of Muslim not taken seriously, and leaders offer no
apology for their leadership role[10]. In one way the Hindutva self has justified the killings of Muslims and other minority groups that often happens in a different part of the country. These killings justified on the grounds of karma and past deed, a clear cut demarcation between good and evil where the Muslims and minorities took as evil in the Hindutva conscience. All the accusation of the leader eroded from the people memory through the media effort and repetitions of the leader as a man of development (Vikas Purush), grounded and pro-poor as compared to the other leader from the opposition who charged as elite and corrupt. The continuous media mobilisation through the news channel and newspapers had stamped the righteousness of the leader despite the criminal charges and made him absolute and unquestionable fact of being authentic.

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[9] https://p.factchecker.in/


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