

# Mainstream

Price: Rs 15

Founded by Nikhil Chakravartty

VOL LVII No 47

New Delhi

November 9, 2019

## Of Abiding Relevance

SANDEEP PANDEY

Commemorating Gandhi while  
Acting against his Principles

*Tribute : Gurudas Dasgupta*

Summary of a Report on Kashmir Visit by  
Doctor, Advocates, TU and Human Rights Activists

M.R. BIJU, M.R.B. ANANTHA PADMANABHA  
Performance of the Non-BJP Parties in  
India's 17th General Elections, 2019

L.K. SHARMA

India's Brand Image Devalued!

**FROM N.C.'S WRITINGS**

• LIGHTS OF MOSCOW

• AFTER INDIRA GANDHI

• REMEMBERING OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1984

# Performance of the Non-BJP Parties in India's 17th General Elections, 2019

M.R.BIJU and M.R.B. ANANTHA PADMANABHA

The 2019 Indian general elections were held in seven phases from April 11 to May 19, 2019 to constitute the 17th Lok Sabha. The votes were counted and result was declared on May 23. About 900 million people were eligible to vote and the turnout was over 67 per cent—the highest ever as well as the highest participation by women voters. The Bharatiya Janata Party won 303 seats, further increasing its substantial majority and the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance won 353 seats. The Indian National Congress won 52 seats, and the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance won 91. Other parties and their alliances won 98 seats. The Congress again failed to secure the requisite 10 per cent of the seats (54 seats) in the Lok Sabha. Hence, India remains without an official Opposition party. The reasons attributed to the victory of the BJP and NDA included the personal popularity of Narendra Modi, effective voter turnout drives by the NDA, a surge in public nationalism following the Pulwama attack, the consolidation of Hindu voters in a multi-caste coalition and the successful implementation of social welfare programmes during the First Modi Ministry's term. Keeping this in the background an attempt has been made in this paper to examine the performance of non-BJP and non-Congress parties. It includes regional parties, Social Justice Parties and the Left. This study also throws light on other key issues including representation of women, representation of Muslims and performance of NOTA etc.

## Indian National Congress

WHEN the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Narendra Modi, stormed to power in 2014, the

Congress was reduced to 44 seats in the Lok Sabha. In 2019, the Congress has suffered another colossal defeat. It won 52 seats, still not enough to claim the post of the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. This dismal result shows that the revival of the once-dominant power-house isn't happening any time soon. Modi's re-election with an even larger majority sanctifies the structural shift to the Right and the BJP's overarching dominance of the political system—that's why the Congress' spectacular defeat in this election is far more consequential than it was in 2014. The Modi landslide in 2019 is not based on any pretence of development, but on the basis of *Hindutva* consolidation and majoritarian triumphalism. The divide-and-rule strategy has succeeded in securing an unprecedented electoral endorsement for Hindu nationalism as large numbers voted for the BJP as the party that best represents, protects and propagates Hindu interests and rejected the pluralistic vision of India.

The 2019 outcome was powered by a hyper-nationalist agenda and Modi's strong advocacy of it. This election was all about the political persona of Modi and what he symbolised: a strong man standing against a divided Opposition. Gandhi is a genial and affable figure, but that seems to put him at a disadvantage when pitted against Modi's muscular leadership in 'new India'. The Congress made a strategic mistake when it decided to focus its attack entirely on Modi. Many voters had said that although they felt that the BJP had not delivered on its promises, they would vote for him because they believe a strong decisive leadership can solve India's numerous problems. Gandhi appeared to see the danger of personalising the campaign, but even then he persisted in repeating the slogan '*chowkidar chor hai*' to dent Modi's image as a scrupulously honest leader, rather than remake his message. In almost every speech he would begin and conclude with the Rafale issue. But it didn't excite anyone except possibly the committed Congress voters attending his rallies. The real gains for the

Prof. (Dr.) M.R.Biju is currently the Dean, School of Social Sciences, Dean, School of Legal Studies, and Head, Department of Public Administration and Policy Studies, Central University of Kerala, Kasargode. M.R.B. Anantha Padmanabha is the Deputy Editor, South Asian Journal of Socio-Political Studies (SAJOSPS).