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Annual Subscription Rates
India : Rs 480
Overseas (By Airmail) : USD 50

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Articles on governance, development, economics and politics and books for review are invited.

Opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors.

Boxed features are compiled by our research team.

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Printed, Published and Owned by
Abhaya Kashyap. Printed at A K Printers,
S-217 Bank Street, Munirka, New Delhi
and published from D-298, Sarvodaya
Enclave, New Delhi-110017.

Editor Abhaya Kashyap

Debacle of the Congress & Left in General Elections

M R Biju & M R B Anantha Padmanabha

The 2019 Indian general election was held in seven phases from 11 April to 19 May 2019 to constitute the 17th Lok Sabha. The votes were counted and result was declared on 23 May. About 900 million people were eligible to vote and 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% of the seats (54 seats) in the Lok Sabha. Hence, India remains without an official opposition party. Legislative assembly elections in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim were held simultaneously with the general election, as well as by-elections to twenty two seats of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. Keeping this in background an attempt has been made in this paper to examine the reasons which led



Prime Minister Narendra Modi gestures towards supporters after his oath during a swearing-in ceremony at the presidential palace in New Delhi, India on May 30, 2019

to the debacle of the Congress and the Left parties.

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's 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

Toilet and LPG

Soon after taking oath in 2014, PM Modi spoke about sanitation being his government's priority. He stated that the lack of cleanliness is the biggest cause of diseases and the biggest threat to health. He, it seems, succeeded in conveying his message that cleanliness is akin to saving money.

He launched a campaign for a toilet in each household and promoted it as a way to keep the environment clean and diseases away. The Modi government claims to have built more than 9 crore toilets for the poor of the country.

Another scheme that got BJP connected to the voters is the LPG scheme. PM Modi launched Ujjawala scheme

providing free LPG connection to the families having no access to cooking gas. The Modi government claimed to have distributed more than 7 crores LPG connections to the poor households and publicised it as a step towards empowerment of women.

These two schemes have, as per Modi government's claim, more than 16 crore beneficiary households. Many of the beneficiaries were in counted in both the categories. Still, it is estimated to have benefited directly or indirectly more than 25 crores of India's 90 crore voters.

The prevailing sentiments among the voters, as reports suggest, was that Modi is the first prime minister who thought about us and our self-respect in daily lives.