

The Sky Is Falling

Crimes are crimes, no matter who commit them. So Communists of all shades were routed in the recently held 15th parliamentary election in their traditional citadels of West Bengal and Kerala. The world is in a deep depression, which will only get worse for at least the next two or three years. What concerns most people is joblessness, seriously lowered income and in many cases homelessness. The marxist left of Bengal had no plan to address the problem. Nor could they connect in any meaningful way with most people. On the contrary they made things worse for ordinary people in their desperation to execute industrialisation policy at any cost. The Bengal marxist syndicate, more precisely CPM, exposed itself as a fascist establishment by indulging in large scale violence against rural people who opposed forcible acquisition of land and resisted police brutalities. The hard reality is that the CPM-led left front has been in power in Bengal because of minority vote. But this time the minority voters refused to oblige them because the notorious land acquisition policy affected them most. Also, urban middleclass voters didn't subscribe to their industrial revolution bluff. The way they have suppressed popular outbursts against anti-people policies to woo industrialists and big business has no parallel in recent history. If leftists and rightists had one thing in common it was an interest in allowing the privileged to go beserk while shrinking the state that communists and socialists all along hoped would solve things.

No doubt by achieving working majority in the newly constituted parliament the Congress party heaved an audible sigh of relief. Their all-India character now seems somewhat convincing as they have succeeded in marginalising the regionalists in some parts of the country, albeit there was hardly any all-India issue in their election campaign other than stability at the centre.

In different states people have voted in different ways to express their concerns about the system that has over the years made their lives more insecure than ever before. With every passing day they see their world of precarious existence is more unstable than they think. The defensive posture posed by the Congress right from the beginning worked in its favour. Also, some pressing local issues like Tamil ethnic cleansing in Sri Lanka, communal riots in Orissa dominated the poll scenario but in the end uncertain future that haunts everybody on the street made all the difference, creating a little bit of swing in favour of Congress. But the new Congress government is unlikely to resolve the oppressive economic atmosphere that has produced an explosive situation across the country. The rise and fall of sensex means little to the common man. People have got tired of trying to live on the crumbs that fall from the chins of the rich and voiced their anger in voting pattern in some fashion.

For the Bharatiya Janata Party, they are bound to lose organisationally further because of massive poll debacle. The backward ideology of communal passion and hindutva even failed to motivate its traditional support base at a time when how to get rid of the all pervasive economic slidedown is all the rage. But the saffron establishment like the self-identified secular brigade crowed over minor issues while playing with the gallery.

Even the left has stopped talking of broader issues that affect everybody in the long run. They are interested in bailing out Tatas, not toilers who find it increasingly difficult to manage day-to-day economic survival.

The climate is warming, the oil supply is peaking, the deserts are advancing and the seas are rising and contain fewer and fewer fish for people to eat. These are again intricately related to globalisation. To most political parties, left and right alike, these are, simply academic exercises which it is not.

Unless the communist left seeks a renewal of its party doctrine and practice, they have no future. They are caught a peculiar situation in which short-term survival is their only pre-occupation. They cannot see anything beyond poll and quite expectedly a poll debacle seems to be sending shivers down their spines. The mighty communist parties of Europe are no longer there because they alienated themselves from the working community—their constituency—in their fathomless love for the wild goose—parliament—in securing privileges for a limited few. They fail to depict events inside and outside India as parts of a larger whole. They are too happy to present the world as a jumble of unconnected happenings. Euphoria over election is over but what is not over is how to confront the dangerous world people live in. □□□