

frontier

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Modi is on the Move

THE INVINCIBILITY OF MODI IS GONE. HIS DECLINE SEEMS inevitable and irreversible. It's the beginning of the end of Modi raj, rather dictatorship, though he is in the saddle for the third time, with a dejected face. Modi's victory is Pyrrhic. Voters refused to subscribe to his lies which were professionally manufactured by the pliant media houses and foreign agencies. The 'one-eyed king in the land of the blind' finds it too difficult to stomach 'defeat in victory'. Not for nothing Modi's post-election speeches sounded subdued. He made the electoral campaign all about him, as if it was a personal referendum and subservient media people tirelessly tried to create a personality cult that now stands shattered. And the cult found an apt expression in his assertion that he has begun to doubt he was a 'biological being'. The living god is no more than an ordinary mortal being! It's no longer a Modi government; it is a coalition government. He will have to depend on the king-makers to keep his crown safe. That he has equalled Nehru in becoming prime minister for the third time may be a consolation prize but that doesn't mean he enjoys absolute power as before.

Their much touted slogan of 'this time beyond 400' is now a big joke across the country. The implied threat in the '400 gamble' that Modi might change the constitution to suit their saffron agenda, finally backfired. Voters now understand that Ram Temple cannot feed the hungry. Nor can Muslim-bashing generate jobs. They lost Faizabad, the constituency where Modi inaugurated a controversial grand temple in Ayodhya in January this year, on the ruins of the Babri Masjid. Despite what manipulated opinion polls say his margin of victory in his own constituency, Varanasi, dropped sharply, sending a clear message to the Ram brigade.

Most of the media responded to Modi's autocracy either by collaborating with the government or toning down their adversarial news instincts. And quite naturally they didn't face brazen intimidation, late night raids, arrests and imprisonments. The humbling of Modi was beyond the imagination of his storm-troopers who have been trained over the years by their fascist ideologues to terrorise their opponents and minority community people.

The domestic agenda for Modi at the moment is daunting and it includes precisely the issues he didn't address during the prolonged election campaign. No doubt governing a parliamentary coalition is an art, which requires compromises and conceding 'unjust' demands of partners. But he

cannot evade the main issues that affect people on the street. Though its working age population numbers one billion, India has only 430 million jobs, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy.' The failure of economic growth to yield more jobs is in large part the story of how India missed out on the manufacturing boom that played out in East Asia over recent decades. From South Korea and China to

Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam, hundreds of millions of people escaped poverty via wages earned in factories'. They didn't depend on government doles. Modi's promise of making India a manufacturing hub is at worst a hoax. The percentage of Indians who can afford a modern middle-class life-style is pitifully small, albeit at 432 million, the Indian middle-class still appears bigger than the US population.

As Modi begins what may be his final term as Prime Minister it remains to be seen how he manages to continue his plan of dividing people with contentious policies driven by religious and cultural practices. Without a majority in Parliament, he is vulnerable like no previous point. How long this coalition with a lot of opportunistic elements will survive is anybody's guess. □□□

09-06-2024

COMMENT

Whales and Big Business

AT PRESENT TWO OF THE RICHEST countries are still engaged in big-time whaling—Japan and Norway. Norway alone kills about 500 whales a year. Iceland is hopefully on way to ending commercial whaling. However other smaller offenders still remain. All this is still happening despite years of highly dedicated efforts by conservationists and all those who value life.

If it was not for these efforts, the scale of the cruelty would have been much higher. At the height of the slaughter, about a century back, nearly 50,000 whales were being killed in a year.

Earlier also the Japanese whalers had made their profits not just from whale meat but also more and more

significantly from whale oil (sperm oil, train oil, melon oil etc. from various different species).

In the post war years the shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis also made huge money from whaling by ignoring regulations, but when he got into trouble the Japanese were quick to buy his whaling business, so that his whaling vessel The Olympic Challenger now made its appearance as the Kyokuyo Maru II. The Japanese too had hardly any inhibitions about breaking conservation regulations. In 2002 the World Wildlife Fund for Research published an open letter by an international team of scientists which stated that Japan's whaling research programme had failed to meet minimum standards for credible science.

The International Convention on Whaling sought to check commercial whaling from 1986 onwards but whalers continued to exploit loopholes like allowing 'research based hunting activities'! So all that the whale killers had to do was to get scientific papers written as a part of their killing spree!!

Whales actually make a very important contribution to maintaining the balance of ocean life. When whales dive deep in the ocean and then come up, they bring with them

important nutrients from the bottom to the surface. This circulation of nutrients helps to create conditions for the abundance of phytoplankton. In addition feces of whales also contribute to this. Phytoplankton in turn provide the basis for the flourishing of a vast diversity of smaller forms of ocean life. In addition these also absorb carbon while releasing oxygen.

Hence apart from being extremely cruel, killing of whales is very harmful for environment and ocean biodiversity.

In any case whales face threats from ecological ruin and pollution of oceans, including chemical and plastic pollution. Hunting of whales adds greatly to these threats, particularly as more females and pregnant ones are killed.

Hunting of whales often leads to reduction of smaller fish catch for traditional fishers and their livelihood is therefore adversely affected. As a result several times conflicts have developed between traditional fishers and big whaling interests but big whaling interests have the power of money on their side. □□□

[Contributed by Bharat Dogra]

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For Frontier Contact

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NOTE

Grieving the Loss of Sher Singh

Sanjeev Kumar writes:

SHER SINGH PASSED AWAY after battling for life for the last 5 years. In May 2019, Sher Singh was exposed to poisonous gases while cleaning a septic tank in Bhagya Vihar, Delhi. Two workers died on the spot while cleaning the septic tank and Sher Singh had been in a critical condition ever since.

Sher Singh was a migrant worker, coming from Tundla (UP) and belonged to the Dalit community. After being unconscious in the septic tank for hours, he was exposed to poisonous toxic gases and his health has been deteriorating since then. After this incident, he was diagnosed with Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B, and many other life threatening ailments.

His wife and four children have been facing the brunt of the tragic incident. Sher Singh was the sole earning member of the family and after his illness, his wife and eldest son have been working odd jobs to pay for medical bills. Last year, their eldest son, aged 15, had to discontinue his education to take up informal work to contribute to the family's income. Everyone in the family also faced severe health consequences and his eldest son was also diagnosed with Tuberculosis. The effects of the incident are irreversible and have al-

tered the life of all the family members.

Manual scavenging is an illegal practice under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (MS Act) which bans the use of an individual to manually clean, carry, or handle human excreta in any manner. It is also an infringement of India's constitutional right to a life with dignity. Despite this, the practice of manual scavenging is rampant not just in rural India but also in urban centers. Sher Singh's death came after an extended battle with the diseases that he acquired after he was made to manually clean a septic tank. Despite it being promised that the treatment of victims of manual scavenging would be free of cost, Sher Singh's family had to bear the cost of his treatment and the government even failed to give him appropriate compensation. This even forced his son into discontinuing his education.

Today, 8 June 2024, Sher Singh passed away after a 5 year long battle. Many people helped Sher Singh's family by providing monetary support for his medical expenses in the last five years. While grieving Sher Singh's death, one must also

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remember how the state failed him and continues to fail many victims of manual scavenging like him. While remembering Sher Singh, concerned citizens must stand in solidarity against the increasing practice of manual scavenging and the alarming number of deaths due to it in the recent past. These sanitation warriors will only be given justice once the state is held accountable. □□□

[Sanjeev Kumar is Secretary of Dalit Adivasi Shakti Adhikar Manch (DASAM)

And Convener of National Alliance of People's Movements—NAPM]

ELECTION 2024

Reclaiming Democratic Space

T Navin

THE TWO CONSECUTIVE terms of the NDA from 2014 to 2024 marked a significant deviation in India's political history. Earlier phases celebrated core Indian values such as respecting diversity and secularism, as well as

constitutional principles of liberty, equality, fraternity, federalism, citizen rights, and directive principles of state policy. However, during this period, an 'electoral autocracy' emerged under the guise of a people's mandate. Citizens were reduced to

passive subjects, expected to display 'nationalism' by abandoning their ability to think, reflect, and question. Vigilant citizens were feared, and those seeking justice were imprisoned. Nationalism was equated with blind devotion, parochialism, and polarisation along religious, caste, linguistic, and ethnic lines. Opposition and dissent were not tolerated. The media, instead of being the fourth pillar of democracy,

became a propaganda machine for the government. Democratic debates and parliamentary discussions were viewed not as essential aspects of parliamentary democracy but as obstacles to the ruling regime's anti-people and divisive agendas. Federalism was not respected.

In mainstreaming divisive and anti-egalitarian agendas and anti-federal values, the Constitution itself was seen as an obstacle. The Prime Minister and many BJP leaders openly declared their intention to cross 400 seats to change the constitution. However, the electoral outcome did not align with BJP's expectations. The people delivered a verdict where the BJP significantly fell short of the majority mark.

Despite the NDA's victory in the 2024 elections, it is a win for the forces defending the Constitution of India and its multicultural and diverse character. One of the BJP's agendas was to do away with the constitution once it secured a large majority and to declare India a Hindu Rashtra in 2025, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the RSS. Being reduced to 240 seats, far behind the majority mark of 272, signifies a rejection of polarising and hate politics, the Prime Minister's dictatorial functioning, the arrogance of power, and the misuse of institutions to target opposition and dissent. It represents a reclaiming of spaces that were taken away. This result came despite the BJP's control over the Election Commission, electoral processes, media, institutions, and investigative agencies used to target opposition and dissenting voices. Unlike its previous terms in 2014 and 2019, where it pushed its agendas without heeding even its own NDA partners, let alone the opposition and people's voices, the reduced size and dependence on coalition partners necessitate a more consultative and democratic approach.

The electoral verdict is a victory for the people—represented by independent voices such as activists, intellectuals, writers, poets, cultural artists, stand-up comedians, YouTubers, alternative media, and civil society representatives. They played a crucial role in fighting back, questioning power, and bringing people's issues to the forefront. The opposition INDIA block put up a spirited fight that yielded positive results despite falling short of a majority. Core issues of the people, such as unemployment, price rise, and citizens' rights, came to the forefront. Movements like Bharat Jodo Yatra and Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, along with the emergence of civil society formations at the state and central levels, brought people's issues to the fore. The 2024 elections succeeded in pushing back against anti-constitutional forces.

On the eve of the election campaign, the Prime Minister resorted to hate politics, using divisive rhetoric with words like 'Mughals,' 'Muslims,' 'Mutton,' 'Machli,' and 'Mangal Sutra.' Minorities were labelled as 'infiltrators' and accused of being 'producers of many children.' The electoral outcome was a clear rejection of such divisive and polarizing politics. It was a strong condemnation of hate speech that incites hatred and violence. This rejection was evident in key constituencies: the constituency at the centre of the Ayodhya movement and Ram temple construction voted against the BJP, and in Banswara, where the Prime Minister delivered his hate speech, the BJP was defeated. Uttar Pradesh which was the centre of Mandir politics saw a rejection of BJP.

The reduction of the BJP's parliamentary strength to 240 seats from its previous majorities in 2014 and 2019 indicates a significant shift. This outcome reflects the electorate's

demand for a more democratic and consultative approach to governance. The voters have emphasized the need for greater respect for democratic processes, advocating for wider engagement with coalition partners, the opposition, and the public. They seek stronger checks and balances to curb autocratic tendencies by enhancing parliamentary debates and promoting transparency. Additionally, there is a clear call for the restoration of the independence of key institutions such as the Election Commission, the Judiciary, and investigative agencies.

During this period, citizens advocating for people's rights and social justice faced severe repercussions, with many imprisoned and dissenting voices defamed in an attempt to crush opposition. However, this suppression led to a revival of active citizen vigilance. Independent voices, including activists, intellectuals, writers, cultural artists, and alternative media, played a crucial role in challenging the status quo. They effectively countered dominant propaganda and highlighted a reality centered on the people's concerns. This renewed civic engagement was evident in movements such as the anti-farmers bill protests and the anti-CAA demonstrations. Civil society's organising efforts before the elections further showcased an alternative reality, energising the citizenry and presenting a powerful counter-narrative to the government's agenda.

The verdict underscores a collective commitment to defending the Constitution and its core principles. These core values of the Indian constitution include justice, encompassing social, economic, and political equality; liberty, including freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship; and equality, ensuring equal opportunity and status before the law. These values are

further upheld by the principles of fraternity, secularism, and respect for diversity, fostering unity and integrity among all citizens while celebrating the nation's rich pluralism. This reaffirmation suggests the protection of fundamental rights ensuring rights of freedom of speech, assembly, and practice of religion is safeguarded. It calls for a return of the rule of law where there is fair and impartial application of laws, rejecting the misuse of law.

Despite not achieving a majority, the opposition's spirited fight has been pivotal. In a challenging environment where media access was

restricted, and harassment by investigative agencies through IT and ED raids was rampant, and accounts were frozen, their resilience stood out. This resilience was characterised by strategic alliances, notably the INDIA coalition, which successfully counterbalanced the dominant BJP's influence. Social coalitions were also formed, focusing on the poorest and most marginalised communities, including SCs, STs, OBCs, and minorities. Despite political differences, these alliances demonstrated a unified effort to uphold democratic values and challenge the status quo.

The 2024 election results reflect

a comprehensive pushback against autocratic governance and a collective effort to restore democratic principles, citizen vigilance, and constitutional values while rejecting divisive politics and showcasing the resilience of democratic forces. While BJP has been pushed back, there is still a long way to go. The Hindutva fascist ideas of the BJP still have an ideological influence and need to be fought at the level of ideology, polity, cultural, social, political, and psychological spheres. □□□

[T Navin is an independent writer.

The article was first published in countercutrents.org

STRUCTURES BENEATH THE SURFACE

Promises and Counter Promises

Neshat Quaiser

IN THE 2024 INDIAN PARLIAMENTARY elections Indian National Congress Party's narrative accusing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for its intended plans to change the Indian Constitution acquired centrality. Thus, the 2024 parliamentary elections critically came to be defined by an ideological battle between the Congress and BJP with two distinctly parallel narratives. Congress' narrative was centrally marked by its claim to defend and protect the secular Indian constitution not only to maintain religious harmony and composite culture and to safeguard democracy but also, and more importantly, to protect and expand the present limits of reservations for people who have suffered caste discrimination for centuries, along with the protection of other constitutional values. BJP and its ideological parent organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), on the other hand, have historically argued that the Indian Constitution does not reflect Indian civilisational ethos which is exempli-

fied by the Manusmriti (which also reinforces the caste system), thus, it should be changed. Thus, change of constitution for BJP is necessary to effect its old agenda of Hindutva majoritarian Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation). As a result, BJP ultimately relied in these elections on the homogenising and hegemonising Hindutva ideology instilling fear of Muslims among Hindus and to accuse Congress for its policy of 'Muslim appeasement'. Thus, to Congress, BJP's plans to change the constitution crucially means not only to attack on the Indian constitutional secular ethos and multi-religious composite culture but also to do away with the reservations and quotas guaranteed by the constitution for the people who have for long suffered caste discrimination.

In addition, the Congress frontally fore-grounded two other issues: the urgency of conducting Caste Census to know exact caste-wise population so that according to the numerical strength, the oppressed and exploited castes could get their

legitimate share in the national resources, thus, centuries-old caste-based discrimination and humiliation could ultimately be eliminated; and the issue of massive unemployment and its plans for guaranteed jobs when it comes to power. Both these issues, particularly the issue of unemployment, caught the imagination of unemployed youths and OBC and Dalit populations with far reaching socio-political implications. Some of its alliance partners too raised the same issues. .

Other hotly debated complementary issues woven within the central antagonistic arguments on the Indian Constitution. Some of these include: Prime Minister's false promises of depositing Rs.15 lakh in every Indian's bank account, providing two crores jobs per year, and doubling the farmers income; high rate of unemployment, backbreaking price-rise; Hindutva, Muslim bashing and falsifying Muslim population, beef; false accusations against Congress such as its plans to give away Hindu property to Muslims; reservation to Muslim, electoral bonds scam; Agniveer scheme; beneficiaries; Nehru, Congress' failures in seventy years, Pulwama attack on the army convoy and surgical

strike against Pakistan, Ram Mandir and article 370 etc. Significantly, key questions of Ram Mandir and article 370 did not emerge as polarising factors as was expected.

The issue of beneficiaries of the various governmental schemes too came to play a significant role in 2024 elections. BJP particularly highlighted its scheme of distributing free five kilogram food grain to 80 crore people; however officially claimed quality and quantity had often been questioned. Moreover, reports from various states suggest that the people have begun to see the political manipulations beneath the surface of BJP's free ration scheme. Most importantly the Supreme Leader – PM – presented the free ration scheme as his personal favour to people not as the constitutional obligation of the state which was part of Congress-led UPA government's Right to Food Act. Congress' counter schemes are presented in its rather radical 2024 manifesto.

However, 2024 elections witnessed the emergence of a third political camp constituted by those citizen-voters who have now begun to see the real structures beneath the apparent. These citizen-voters are pro-

pelled "by the contingencies of life and its counter-intuitive comprehension" defying normative expectations of political parties.

Printed written words constituting a stable political text of a political party means accountability to people who consider it as their redeemer; and the political party's continued adherence to its written words must manifest in a stable pattern of practice to gain sanctity for its words in the eyes of people. Commonsensically, the written words in indelible ink are considered very valuable, reliable and sanctified by common people and they believe that if some people or certain organisations have committed to certain ideological positions in writing then one can catch hold of them if they do not honour their own written words. For common people it can signify dishonouring the body of innocence – i.e. the innocence of believing other fellow human beings in good faith is dishonoured, as if they have been betrayed.

A critical dimension in these elections seemed to be unearthing the Congress Party's constitutional *raison-d'être* and the sanctity of its written words hidden beneath its surface prac-

tices for various factors. Congress' past political positions with regard to global economic and political power structures and many of its domestic economic and social policies and practices including communal riots have constantly come under heavy criticism. However, present unearthing is linked to certain definite signs that a new Congress under Rahul Gandhi with Mallikarjun Kharge is emerging with radical socio-economic agenda upholding secular constitutional values, and more importantly, its constant and direct ideological attack on Hindutva ideology and practices particularly by Rahul Gandhi; although this endeavour might face resistance from within by the Congressmen with casteist, feudal and couched communal predispositions. However, this realisation about the significance of the Congress' written words, having far reaching theoretical and practical implications, seems to have slowly begun to inhabit the minds of people including Muslims particularly in the context of the rampant rise of crony capitalism and the naked Hindutva communal practices.

□□□

[This an abridged version of an article originally published in the Mainstream Weekly]

SURRENDER TO HINDUTVA

End of Navin Raj in Odisha

Bhabani Shankar Nayak

*Here richly, with ridiculous display,
The Politician's corpse was laid away.
While all of his acquaintances sneered and slanged
I wept: for I had longed to see him hanged.
Another on the Same" —Hilaire Belloc*

THE 20TH-CENTURY CONSERVATIVE French and English poet Hilaire Belloc did not write this poem, 'Epitaph on the Politician Himself', to pen the political obituary for the long-serving outgoing Chief Minister of Odisha, Mr. Naveen Patnaik. However, each word of the poem aptly resonates

with the political and electoral transformation in Odisha. Ordinary people push all-powerful to the dustbin of history and make them irrelevant in public life while exercising their democratic dissent in the form of voting during elections.

No one is studying Odisha politics immediately after the recent elec-

toral defeat of Mr Naveen Patnaik led by Biju Janata Dal (BJD) which has governed the state for more than two decades. The 4th of June election result has already written the political epitaph of many BJD leaders including its founder Mr Patnaik. It is an ignominious end to the long-standing political dominance of BJD and its future in the state. It has effectively become irrelevant in national politics with no seats in the Lok Sabha.

This electoral defeat and dissatisfaction of Odia people and their discontent was directed not just at the party, but personally at Mr Patnaik, who had been a central

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figure in Odisha politics for decades. He was defeated in the Kantabanji assembly seat and his vote share has declined in Hinjili where he won with a smaller margin of votes than in the previous state election. Mr Patnaik has squandered the political goodwill of the working masses in the state. His political demise is a product of his own making. Mr Patnaik's political demise and his precarious political future can be attributed to several factors.

Mr Patnaik's resigned state of leadership with a withdrawn mindset, over-dependence on ignorant and arrogant bureaucrats, technocratic political interventions, over-engagement with religion, imposition of unpopular leadership on the party and the state, and disengagement with working masses, failure to deliver development, employment, livelihoods, and empowered citizenship to people etc have alienated many within his party and among Odia voters as well. Additionally, there were growing concerns over corruption, lack of development in key areas of health, education agriculture, and a failure to address the needs and aspirations of the younger generation. These issues cumulatively eroded the trust and support that the BJD once enjoyed. Furthermore, the opposition parties like BJP capitalised on these weaknesses, mounting a more effective campaign that resonated with the public's desire for change.

The defeat of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), therefore, is not merely a reflection of Mr Patnaik's political missteps but also a testament to the evolving political sentiments in Odisha, where people have rejected the imposed leadership of an unelected bureaucrat. Voters in the state are increasingly demanding accountability and progressive governance—qualities that Hindutva politics is unlikely to provide. This shift in voter sentiment highlights a

broader trend where citizens are prioritising effective leadership and tangible improvements in their quality of life over the ideological agendas pursued by Hindutva politics.

Mr Patnaik has played a significant role in the rejuvenation of Hindutva politics in the state. His alliance government with the BJP marked the initial step in Hindutva politics' quest to capture state power in Odisha. The BJP, acting as a secondary partner to Mr Patnaik's BJD, failed to deliver meaningful results for the people of the state while serving in the opposition. Moreover, under Mr Patnaik's leadership, the BJD has consistently supported BJP policies and bills in the Indian parliament, blurring the lines between the two parties in terms of governance. As a result, there has been very little distinction between the BJD and the BJP in their approach to governing Odisha in terms of economic policies for development. Both pander to primitive crony capitalists who plunder the natural resources in the state.

In the coming months, it will be crucial to monitor how the BJD attempts to regroup and rebuild itself as a political entity, and whether Mr Patnaik will play any role in this process. Equally important will be the actions and policies of the new government led by the BJP, as they will set the course for Odisha's future development and political stability as per the Hindutva requirements.

Interreligious and intercultural harmony is the hallmark of Odisha. It is the duty of all to protect it from Hindutva onslaught. There is no place for the Hindutva culture of religious violence in the state. The people of Odisha must remain vigilant about the divisive policies and politics of Hindutva forces, ensuring that the state and its government work for the peace and prosperity of all its residents without any form of discrimination.

As Odisha moves forward, politi-

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cal parties will need to adapt to these changing expectations. They must focus on addressing the real issues facing the populace, such as economic development, education, employment, healthcare, and infrastructure, rather than relying on the divisive or outdated rhetoric of

Hindutva politics. The recent electoral outcomes suggest that only those who can genuinely respond to the needs and aspirations of the people will find lasting success.

The fall of BJD and the rise of Hindutva politics led by BJP also offer alternative experiments in

Odisha, where all progressive, left, democratic, liberal, and secular forces can consolidate to create a political movement for the progressive, peaceful, and prosperous future of Odia people and their planet. □□□

*[Bhabani Shankar Nayak,
University of Glasgow, UK32]*

MODI'S DISCOVERY

Gandhi Film

Ram Puniyani

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH ABP on 29th May, Prime Minister Modi stated "In the last 75 years, wasn't it our responsibility to make Mahatma Gandhi known across the world? Forgive me, but nobody knew Mahatma Gandhi" till the film on him was released in 1982. When he was saying this the ABP persons interviewing him had stony expressions. They did not react to this elementary falsehood being dished out by the PM. The aim of this statement towards the fag end of the prolonged campaign for General Elections is not hard to guess.

Severe criticism of his ten-year regime on issues of employment, rising prices, the plight of farmers, paper leaks, the Agni veer scheme, etc. was getting traction. How to divert the attention from these core issues of people was his major concern. This outpouring on Mahatma Gandhi served another function apart from distracting attention from people's issues; it targeted Nehru and earlier Congress regimes for ignoring the popularisation of Gandhi in the global arena.

More than criticism of Nehru-earlier Congress regimes, actually it shows Modi's ignorance about the life and works of Gandhi, his international prestige, and his role in being the lighthouse for major figures of the World. It shows Modi's ignorance about Gandhi's influence

on global politics from the decade of 1930s itself, much before Richard Attenborough came out with this biopic on him, based on the biography written by Luis Fisher.

With Gandhi's struggles in South Africa, he came to be recognised as a major leader against apartheid. With his coming to India and leading the Champaran movement for farmers, his friend Charlie Andrews spread to the World the unique nature of Champaran Satyagraha. His unique tool of Satyagraha based on truth and nonviolence began to draw the attention of the World toward the problems of the weak and exploited.

Later other movements launched by him; Civil disobedience and Salt March; were widely covered in the global media. The attention paid to him was mainly a source of inspiration for the struggle for justice and the involvement of people around the concerns of society. His lifework and messages spread with lightning speed on a global scale. On one hand; the British rulers intensified the repression in India and on the other, those respecting peace, justice, and non-violence started noticing Gandhi's contribution to principles of humanism at the Global level.

While Modi may not know the real contribution of Gandhi and his great popularity in the World since that time; he needs to know that the English Newspaper, "The Burlington

Hawk-Eye", Sunday Morning September 20, 1931, carried a full page feature on him, "Most Talked about man in the World". The renowned American magazine, Time, carried him on the Cover as 'Man of the Year in 1931' and on two other occasions, he was on the cover of this coveted magazine. Similarly, Time's companion magazine Life also carried a feature on him.

The global personalities contributing to the process of peace and justice through their works and ideas started getting attracted to him. The major scientist Albert Einstein wrote in 1939, "I believe that Gandhi's views were the most enlightened of all the political men of our time. We should strive to do things in his spirit: not to use violence in fighting for our cause, but by non-participation in anything you believe is evil," He said of Gandhi "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."

Sir Charles Chaplin, inspired by Gandhi's movement, ensured a meeting with him and the reflection of Gandhi's values is very much there in his films, 'Modern Times' and 'The Great Dictator'. In the latter Chaplin contrasts Gandhi with Hitler. Similarly, French dramatist Roman Rolland in the French edition of Young India wrote, "If (Jesus) Christ was the Prince of Peace, Gandhi is no less worthy of this noble title."

Two of the major activists of the twentieth Century, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela drew the inspiration and direction for the path of

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their struggle from Gandhi. In an article for Hindustan Times in 1959 King wrote, "I came to see at a very early stage that a synthesis of Gandhi's method of non-violence and the Christian ethic of love is the best weapon available to Negroes for this struggle for freedom and human dignity"

And finally, the massive and prolonged struggles of Nelson Mandela had the underlying values derived from Gandhi's life and teachings. He lauded "Mahatma Gandhi combined ethics and morality with a steely resolve that refused to compromise with the oppressor, the British Empire."

Modi should just know that to-

day there are a large number of Universities in the World where Gandhian studies are a part of their curricula. Many schools are trying to teach his values. Nearly 80 global cities have Gandhi Streets and Gandhi statues installed in their prominent places.

As far as films are concerned India's own Films Division had come out with a documentary film, made by Vithalbhai Jhaveri much before Attenborough. Attenborough saw this film twice and advised the lead actor of the film, Ben Kingsley to watch it to understand Gandhi's mannerisms etc.

As for the Modi allegation that the previous regimes did not do

anything to popularise Gandhi in the World, even in the making of the Attenborough film, the Indian Government through the National Films Development Corporation contributed a major sum to making this film. For Mr Modi's information, the Attenborough film is dedicated amongst others to Nehru also. It was Nehru who advised him not to present Gandhi as a superhuman being, but as the one with all his weaknesses and strengths as he led the nation. Gandhi's international reputation is not due to films but films have been made due to his fame and reputation. The number of books written on and about him is astounding. □□□

THE OTHERSIDE OF THE RIVER

Protests in PoK

Iftikhar Gilani

RECENT EVENTS IN PAKISTAN-occupied Kashmir (PoK, also known as Azad Jammu and Kashmir, or AJK) mirror this pattern. Faced with a hike in electricity tariffs amid soaring inflation of 17 per cent in Pakistan, residents took to the streets in protest, resulting in the death of four people. The civil rights movement, while achieving its immediate demands, highlights the ongoing problems with governance and economic instability.

India controls about 55 per cent of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir's land area, which supports 70 percent of the population. Pakistan controls about 30 per cent of the land area, which includes the so-called Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, and China controls the remaining 15 per cent of the land area, which includes the Aksai Chin region, the largely uninhabited Trans-Karakoram tract, and part of the Demchok sector. Pakistan has granted Gilgit-Baltistan a separate

administrative arrangement and separated it from the rest of the region. On August 5, 2019, the region on the Indian side was divided into the two separate Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

The areas of Neelum and Muzaffarabad in PoK border the districts of Kupwara and Baramulla in the Kashmir Valley. However, most of the area, including Bagh, Palindri, Rawalakot, Kotli, Mirpur, and Bhambar, lies on the other side of the Jammu division.

Although the Indian and Pakistani controlled regions have little in common in terms of race and language, they are linked by the boundaries drawn in the Amritsar Agreement of 1846, which still figure in official maps. Even though people across the Line of Control (LoC) remain indifferent to each other's affairs, their political future is inextricably linked to the claims and counterclaims on their territory by the respective governments.

Historically, PoK has not been a hotbed of political unrest. The last time any major unrest occurred there was in February 1992 when the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front encouraged people to cross the LoC. The resulting conflict with the Pakistan Army was bloody and left 12 people dead and 150 injured.

Other parallels with the "unpopular" Farooq government of 1987 are that the PoK has seen three Prime Ministers in four years since the 2021 general election. After the party of the then Pakistani Prime Minister, Imran Khan, won a majority that year, Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi was appointed head of government, but he was ousted and replaced by the businessman Tanveer Ilyas.

A year later, Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq, who also belonged to Khan's party, took office with the support of Pakistan's main political parties that were opposed to Khan. According to Justice (retd) Manzoor Gillani, a former Chief Justice of the AJK Supreme Court, this undermined public confidence in the government.

The journalist and analyst Arif Bahar argues that viewing PoK solely from a security perspective has led

to a compromised leadership and festering problems. According to him, the strategy of remote-controlled leadership has failed, as evidenced by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) movement.

The Anwar-ul-Haq government did introduce reforms such as abolishing secret funds, awarding government contracts through electronic tenders, and cutting government spending by more than 90 per cent. Its austerity measures, such as biometric attendance checks for employees and a crackdown on tax evasion, made him unpopular among the region's 1,27,000 civil servants.

The lack of credibility has made it difficult for the government to implement economic reforms without a public backlash. Lieutenant General Asad Durrani, a former head of Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI, said: "This has shown that governments without public credibility and acceptance cannot afford to implement reforms such as reducing subsidies or increasing electricity tariffs. Reforms are best carried out by regimes that enjoy the trust of the people."

Nabila Irshad, a lawyer and leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Party, told Frontline that the unrest was not directed against the Pakistani state. However, she acknowledged that successive Pakistani governments had interfered with the tenure of the elected government to achieve certain goals, with serious consequences.

"Earlier, the weakness of the people was that they gave representation to unqualified people on the basis of caste, community, and regional affiliation. This incompetent leadership has failed to make the federal government recognise the national interest and instead focus on personal gains," she said.

She said that the way forward was to implement true democratic

principles, promote capable leadership, and ensure that the government served the people in an equitable manner.

Another politician from the region, Maria Iqbal Tarana, said the current wave of protests was a sign of change in the region and reflected the growing discontent among the people over economic hardships and perceived discrimination by the federal government in Islamabad. "The JAAC's demands underscore a broader frustration and yearning for fundamental change," she said.

Tarana, who is also the general secretary of the human rights wing of the Pakistan People's Party, said that while the region had its own government on paper, led by a Prime Minister and supported by a Legislative Assembly, Islamabad had significant influence over its day-to-day affairs. "Following the abolition of Article 370 in Indian-administered Kashmir in 2019, concerns have arisen about the possible incorporation of Pakistan-administered Kashmir into Pakistan. However, the ongoing unrest is primarily due to economic grievances and local political demands rather than fears of assimilation or annexation," she said.

Tarana said that legally PoK was neither fully integrated into Pakistan nor recognised as a sovereign state. She said the Pakistani government must heed the calls for economic relief and political fairness to restore peace in the sensitive region.

Long before the protests took an ugly turn, Anwar-ul-Haq himself told a meeting of the Pakistan Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue that he belonged to the last generation of Kashmiris (people from PoK also call themselves Kashmiris) who still feel love and affection for Pakistan.

In the video recording of the meeting, which went viral, he can be seen explaining that the new

generation is frustrated with the way the Pakistani establishment treats the regions.

In his presentation, he said that his region produced 2,600 MW of electricity, but it consumed only 350 MW. He wanted electricity at the same price as is generated at Mangla Dam in Mirpur. He said this dam produced power at Pakistani rupees 3 to 4 a unit, which is then passed on to the national grid and the power utilities, which in turn sell it to his government at Pakistani rupees 30 a unit.

"My electricity is not available to me. First it goes to you, then to the Central Power Purchase Committee, and then to the electricity boards. Then they write losses to our account. Every year in June, they tell us that you have a deficit of 600 million rupees and that you are unable to pay this amount, and deduct it from our share in the central budget," Haq said.

He said that every June, when his government prepared the budget and waited for funds, a huge amount was deducted at source.

He told the Pakistan Senate that when Pakistan had to build a dam, his region had given away its land and sacrificed big cities like Mirpur. He asked Pakistani politicians why they were unable to build the Kala Bagh Dam in their territory.

"Why are the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh against its construction and why do not they have the same zeal to sacrifice themselves for Pakistan as the people of AJK," he asked.

He even warned that the successive governments of Pakistan-administered Kashmir have been pressured so much that they have stopped breathing. "I tell you that my generation will be the last one to have affection and love for Pakistan. Relations are weakening day by day. Our space is getting narrower and

narrower. If we raise our voice, we will be labelled nationalists, those who are against Pakistan,” he said.

In contrast to the homogeneous population of the Kashmir Valley, the demography of PoK is complex. The region is characterised by a caste, or baradari system, which also determines voting behaviour. The predominant groups are Gujjars, Sudhans, Jats, Rajputs, Mughals, Awans, Dhunds, and a tiny group of ethnic Kashmiris. The predominant language is Pahari, which is close to Hindko and Punjabi.

The Kashmiri-speaking population, which dominates on the Indian side (52.46 per cent in the whole of Jammu and Kashmir and 86 per-

cent in the Kashmir Valley), accounts for only 5 per cent on the Pakistani side.

Observers say the protests over specific economic grievances reflect a broader frustration with disempowerment and frequent interference from Islamabad. There are fears that Pakistan may try to integrate PoK with neighbouring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, on the pretext of ensuring law and order, and in the process dilute the region's unique cultural and political identity and also end the people's privilege of calling themselves Kashmiris.

All agreements between the princely states and the British government lapsed on August 15, 1947.

Therefore, the State of Jammu and Kashmir became technically free from August 1947. Parts of the State were liberated by the people from the forces of the local Dogra ruler, and they proclaimed their government on October 24, 1947. When Maharaja Hari Singh acceded to India, he was left with the part that had remained under him, not the part that had been liberated from him. The AJK government later entered into an agreement in which it ceded its sovereignty to Pakistan (Karachi Agreement of April 1948). That is the legal and factual position, which has remained hidden from the Indian public. □□□

[Journalist Iftikhar Gilani is based in Ankara. Courtesy: Frontline Magazine]

REVIEW ARTICLE

*Cold Facts that Changed Indian History...!

Robert Clements

AS THE WHEELS OF HISTORY, that had come to a standstill more in shock and terror, turn once more in India, with new positivity and harmonious energy, as minorities raise their nearly severed heads towards a newly found freedom, it's days of hope they know will greet them once more, from the isolation and near persecution they have been subjected to for the last ten years. But in the 2024 elections, a nearly mutilated and decapitated opposition, funds frozen, members jailed, and others hounded by government agencies—ED, CBI etc. managed to clip the wings of the ruling party and curb the misused power that was being used, with the simple use of the ballot!

And how were the inked fingers convinced? What swayed the voters to reject the very ones that had propped up onto the Delhi chair? How were they convinced otherwise?

Not by hateful speeches, vengeful responses and mob frenzy.

*‘THE STATUS OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF IN INDIA SINCE 2014—A REPORT’ is published jointly by Media House and Centre for Study of Society and Secularism. Number of pages: 183 Available on Amazon Price: INR 390 (Paper Back)

Not by violent protests and parliamentary speeches, but by relentlessly presented, cold facts and figures of atrocities committed, killings executed, genocide ordered, event by event, put together, without emotion, just with time, date, people butchered and brutal events documented.

Bold men of India, travelled deep into the heartlands, nay crime-lands of the country, interviewed afflicted ones, comforted the bereaved, and recorded horrific events that the government had turned a blind eye to.

The voters didn't. Their eyes were opened.

Events recorded in books like the ‘Status of Freedom of Religion or Belief in India Since 2014--A re-

port”, changed the landscape of the country on election results day, 4th June, 2024, turning huge areas of saffron to a welcome, comforting green. Voters read, voters heard from those who read, and as incident after incident chronicled by lawyer Irfan Engineer, was received with shock and distress, the reaction was that the voter rejected in powerful numbers the handing over of such absolute power to the Bharatiya Janata Party again.

The book, mentions in detail, not just rapes and murders of minorities, but emotionlessly, hundreds of events of instigation and police brutality, changing of laws for the convenience of the majority, curbing of freedoms to curtail the minority, done with the blessings of the government. Events from Manipur to Mangalore, from Kashmir to Kolar! Brutal, heartrending, violent, ruthless!

Only a lawyer with a dispassionate eye could have looked at each such incident, and carefully noted the law misused or unused, or made useless. Only, a lawyer could have stated facts, leaving it to the mind's eye of the reader to imagine each gruesome act or each incident of

sheer helplessness by the victims, and hear their anguished, silent screams in the quiet of their reading room.

The book begins with the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of India, then moves onto the absolute disregard by the state to ensure these freedoms, and then detailed reports from all across India of acts of terror, and hate speeches

by those in power that ignited these horror activities.

The people read, and the people cried 'enough' and it is to the likes of Irfan Engineer that we need to say a big thank you, for risking their lives and placing the safety and security of the people of India before their own lives.

The above is the review of the

book 'The Status of Freedom of Religion or Belief in India since 2014-A Report' authored by Adv. Irfan Engineer. Irfan Engineer is a prominent author and social activist working on the issues of communal violence, freedom of religion, pluralism and democracy. Bob Clements is a columnist and thinker.

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COALITION CULTURE IS BACK

Why Modi Underperformed

Ravi Agrawal

[From pundits to polls, there was a wide expectation this year that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi would not just win a rare third consecutive term but would secure an even bigger parliamentary majority than he had before. As it emerged on Tuesday, India's voters had other ideas. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the most seats—more than the entire opposition alliance combined—but will need the help of coalition allies to form a government. Modi has never needed to share power before and it's anyone's guess as to how he will adapt to the vulnerabilities of coalition politics.]

What will the surprising election results mean for politics in India and for India's place in the world? Ravi Agrawal, the editor in chief of Foreign Policy spoke with two experts Milan Vaishnav, the director of the South Asia programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Yamini Aiyar, the former president of New Delhi's Centre for Policy Research. Excerpts:]

Ravi Agrawal: There was a wide expectation that Modi would return to power in a landslide. He didn't. What went wrong?

Milan Vaishnav: If we rewind the clock to January and February of this year, before voting began, every pre-election survey pointed in one direction. And that was an overwhelming majority for the BJP, plus seats for the BJP's allies known as the NDA. Exit polls reconfirmed that as recently as June 1. But that's not what we saw. We saw a BJP that fell short of a governing majority. It will only be in power thanks to the help and assistance of its coalition partners.

The overarching message or takeaway for me was that it really wasn't clear what this election was about. It's such an obvious question to ask, but I have no answer for it. And this really hurt the BJP. There was no defining economic, national security, emotive issue. And what ended up happening, in broad strokes,

was more of a classic state-by-state contest where local factors, incumbency, caste equations, party dynamics, alliances mattered much more. The BJP is on much weaker ground there. They have been the incumbent for 10 years. They have a motley group of opposition parties which have banded together with the explicit purpose of keeping the BJP out of power. There was some upset within the BJP's ranks. They replaced over 100 of their sitting MPs, bringing in defectors and turncoats from other parties. This is important because the BJP is a rank-and-file, cadre-based party, so they don't necessarily take very kindly to people coming from the outside. And so they really struggled to do something that we think of as part of the BJP's strength, which is crafting a narrative.

But it was really the opposition, on the campaign trail, which was very disciplined in its messaging, hitting the government hard on the state of the

economy, inequality, social injustice. And unlike opposition campaigns of the past, they stayed on message. They were nimble and they were very clever. It was the first time in a while when you saw opposition social media ads and you laughed out loud because of how cutting they were.

RA: Yamini, there's been a lot of commentary about how democracy has been challenged in India. Do the results show that democracy is, in fact, alive and well in India?

Yamini Aiyar: Every poll and, frankly, everybody from elites and opinion-makers to opposition parties and people out of the ivory towers had the same sense that Modi is going to come back. It was, in fact, on the back of that confidence that they coined the phrase "Char Sau Paar," meaning this time we will cross more than 400 [seats in parliament]. Five hundred and forty-three is the total number of seats, so if you hit 400, you've achieved hegemonic dominance.

At the start of the campaign, a set of actions was taken by the government that gave a sense that dominance was now full and complete. In January, there was the consecration of the Ram Temple, a long-standing contestation around India's secularism and Hindu identity, in which it looked like the Hindu national narrative had won. The prime minister was a sole priest, publicly and visibly participating as the key actor in the consecration ceremony. All over the city, people celebrated this huge

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achievement of what had really been the heart and soul of the struggle of the Hindu nationalist movement through the '80s and '90s, which was when they rose.

The slide into authoritarianism had begun a long time ago, but it accelerated in some ways in those two months before the elections, hitting a crescendo when one of the leading opposition voices was jailed days before the campaign officially began. The Congress Party, the leading opposition party, comes out saying, "Our accounts have been frozen." And in the backdrop of this, several other politicians have investigative agencies chase after them, civil society is completely curbed. There was a sense that there is no space for active political contestation, that dominance has been achieved, that this election was going to be won before it even began. And then the campaign started.

As the campaign unfolded, the BJP had one national agenda. So I disagree with you, Milan. There was a national agenda. It's just that agenda wasn't as exciting to all voters. The national agenda was Modi, Modi's charisma, Modi's personality, Modi's omnipresence, his mesmerising charm, the spell that he had cast on the Indian voter over these last 10 years. And it was Modi's guarantee, which is the title of the BJP manifesto. Modi was the sole and only campaigner.

The opposition, which was struggling to figure out how to create cohesion, was listening and engaging in some remarkable ways. The first and most important thing was the economy, as Milan mentioned. People wanted to hear from the BJP what they had to say about the two things that were hurting them the most, particularly in north India, which was unemployment and, linked to that, inflation. Early in the campaign, some BJP leaders, perhaps in their hubris,

let out that there was some thinking about changing the constitution. And that is why they needed total dominance. The Indian electorate was already beginning to wonder about this total dominance. This idea of "crossing 400" had a sense of arrogance that was beginning to become uncomfortable. And you saw this in the growing emergence of social media influencers who were really hitting out at the authoritarian tendencies of the government. Their numbers started rising, a sign that voters were looking for something else. This, combined with this challenge to the constitution, became a live issue which the opposition was able to harness into a cohesive narrative and link it very interestingly to caste politics. Suddenly, caste was back in contention because the constitution was written by B R Ambedkar, who is a very important figure for lower-caste politics in India. But also the constitution contains hard-fought rights linked to reservations [affirmative action]. So the opposition built this into a narrative about social justice. The voter, too, was beginning to express an exhaustion with the constant polarisation and the constant authoritarianism. These were the messages that eroded support for Modi, and that's where the election landed.

RA: How do you think he and his party will approach power sharing? And what do you think that means for governance?

MV: We are truly in uncharted territory. Narendra Modi was the chief minister of the state of Gujarat, the state's chief executive, for 13 years. He always had an overpowering single-party majority. When he transitioned to national life as prime minister in 2014, for the past 10 years, he has always had a dominant majority. Yes, he had coalition allies. They were extraneous. They were superfluous. He didn't need them. He campaigned with them. He let them come along for the ride. He

didn't count on them to prove his majority on the floor of parliament.

We're in a completely different scenario here. We have two political parties: the Telugu Desam Party, which is the ruling party in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, and the Janata Dal (United), part of the ruling alliance with the BJP in the state of Bihar. Together, they have about 30 seats. They could make or break this government. So they are going to extract their pound of flesh. This is not something that Narendra Modi has a lot of practice doing. Those of us who have watched him over the past two decades are really not sure how he's going to manage. His style of governance is very much top-down: centralising power, working with the bureaucracy, cutting out members of the cabinet. But you're now going to have your key coalition partners who are going to have important positions in the Council of Ministers.

All of a sudden, you may even have a party which has two seats in the national parliament of 543, which is going to say, "No, no, no. If I leave, this is going to hurt you." We don't know how he's going to manage because he's never had to do this before.

RA: Yamini, from the 1980s onward, most Indian administrations were coalition governments, and one can say that Modi between 2014 and 2024 was a sort of exception to that norm. How do coalition governments tend to do in India?

YA: Coalitions work in India because of the peculiar nature of India's politics. As democracy deepened, coalition politics, state politics, regional politics became very important ways in which ethnic anxieties, linguistic anxieties, caste-related pressures for access to state power found accommodation. So it is really about the fundamental principle of democracy, which is a politics that becomes accommodative for a large country

like India, with multiple fissures and deep forms of inequality. It sometimes can slow decision-making down.

I think that cooperation, dialogue, deliberation—which are at the heart of coalition politics—are good for India. It may mean that decisions cannot be taken immediately, but the decisions that are taken are more long-standing. So I don't think there's much for us to worry about. We have experienced dominance, we know its limits, and we know that it's really important to have checks and balances. The Indian voters' message, in my reading of this election, is a nuanced message. It's a message that says, "Modi, we're not completely giving up on you, but we don't like how you've done stuff. So you're a little bit on notice." And to the opposition, "We're kind of interested but not fully convinced, so you're on notice, too." It's on both of them. So if the opposition, which is now a little stronger, uses parliament productively for serious debate, I think we will actually end up with far more useful

economic reform. Our growth trajectory is at a place where much of what needs to be done requires cooperation with states, and so coalitions will help move us in that direction.

MV: The empirical evidence is very clear. Economic growth has been better and higher under coalition governments than single-party majorities. It is true that it is harder to enact new reforms, but it is also harder to undo old reforms. When you have a country that's slowly moving in a more pro-market direction, I think it's important. But the second part of what Yamini said is equally important, which is there's also an institutional corollary here. When you have a more fragmented, multipolar political system, independent institutions like the Election Commission, like the Supreme Court, like the Reserve Bank of India, like various anti-corruption accountability institutions, they have space and don't feel suffocated. They don't feel the need to pay excessive deference to the ruling party. Some of these institutions, which have re-

ally not been very effective for the past 10 years, might start reclaiming some of that space back.

YA: But this is uncharted territory for Modi and his comrade in arms, Amit Shah. They have never been in a situation where they are not in total control. It really depends on how they read the mandate. Do they read the mandate like I do, as a nuanced mandate where the electorate is saying, "Some things you did, we don't like, so stop."? Or do they read it to say, as some of their Twitter trolls have been doing, which is, "The Hindus have let us down. Those cross-caste coalitions have let us down. Let's go back to our core agenda."? Will they then act as wounded animals and push back even further? They still have powers. It's really about whether they shift their governance strategy or whether they double down, because now they are in a slightly weaker position and have to reestablish their dominance.

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[Source: Foreign Policy]

LETTERS

Targeting School

Israeli troops have launched a new ground and air offensive in central Gaza, where many Palestinians have fled in recent weeks from Rafah in the south. A predawn strike hit a UN-run school that had been sheltering displaced families. At least 140 Palestinians have been killed in the past two days according to a hospital press release.

A Reader

Hate Free Nation

In today's digital age, where information is at our fingertips, the prevalence of fake news, propaganda, and hate speech has become alarmingly pervasive. In the midst of this chaos, there's a dire need for individuals to arm themselves with the truth and actively combat misinformation. This is where CJP's HATE BUSTERS steps in.

As we stand on the precipice of a

crucial moment in our nation's history, the stakes couldn't be higher. The integrity of our democratic process hangs in the balance, and the responsibility falls on all of us to safeguard it. With your support and commitment to truth and justice, we can ensure that we are free from hate and manipulation. Lets fight for HATE FREE NATION.

With the proliferation of fake news, propaganda, and hate speech, there's a very real fear that hate speech, divisive tactics and appeals to religious, caste, or communal sentiments pose a significant threat to the democratic fabric of our nation.

Only Muslims practice Polygamy?

In this episode, aamchi Mumbai ke veteran pantars, Bade and Chote, debunk the myth of mass scale polygamy in Muslims of India.

Through rigorous fact-checking

efforts, educational campaigns, and community engagement initiatives, we're arming citizens with the tools they need to distinguish fact from fiction and to resist the influence of divisive rhetoric. By promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills, we're empowering voters to make informed decisions based on evidence, rather than succumbing to fear or prejudice.

CJP

CPI-ML in '24 Elections

In Bihar, CPI(ML) won in two out of the three constituencies it contested. In Karakat, Rajaram Singh and in Arrah, Sudama Prasad have won. Dr. Sandeep Saurav was the runner up in Nalanda LS constituency. CPIML had also contested as part of the INDIA alliance in Kodarma (Jharkhand), where sitting MLA of Bagodar Vinod Singh was the candidate. It must be noted that after the

disqualification of Manoj Manzil as the MLA from Agiaon in Bihar, due to his conviction in a politically motivated case, Agiaon had bypolls, in which Shivprakash Ranjan of CPIML has won. CPIML also contested independently in parliamentary elections from Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh, Koraput in Odisha and Bardhaman Purba in West Bengal. Besides, the party had also fielded candidates in the Assembly elections held simultaneously in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha on five seats each in these states.

ML Update

A Deadly Alliance

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was one of the first world leaders to offer his country's unequivocal support to Israel following the Hamas-led attack on October 7th. India has since dispatched combat drones as well as replacement labor to Israel to facilitate violence against Palestinians; it has also refused to criticize Israel on the international stage. At the same time, Indian police have been replicating Israeli tactics to repress protests within India itself. Now, eight months into Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, India heads to the polls in an election that is expected to deliver Modi's Hindu nationalist movement its third term in office. For India's religious and caste minorities, Modi's return means the consolidation of India as a Hindu supremacist state; on a global scale, meanwhile, it heralds the expansion of authoritarianism and the strengthening of India's deadly alliance with Israel.

JC

Climate Change

El Pais recently interviewed former US vice-president AL Gore, who has become a leading figure in the struggle to combat the effects of climate change and a *bête noir* of the fossil fuel industry, which the Nobel laureate cites as being the main actor responsible for climate change and global warming. "We are pressing against the limits of what the ecological systems of the Earth can tolerate

without breaking," the former presidential candidate said. "Extreme, climate-related events have been changing people's minds and waking them up to the reality that we cannot continue to use the sky as an open sewer [...] We can't destroy our home, we only have one and we have to protect it. We're not going to get rocket ships and go to Mars."

El Pais

Targeting Christians in Pakistan

The Inter-Religious Solidarity Council condemns the recent assaults targeting Christians in Sargodha district of Punjab Province in Pakistan on May 25th that resulted in severe injuries to 10 individuals, with churches in the Mujahid Colony being attacked. The attacks took place upon allegations that a Christian man named Nazir Masih (70) had desecrated the Holy Quran. A mob of enraged individuals attacked Nazir's home, resulting in his severe injuries, and also set fire to his shoe factory, several other shops and houses in the vicinity owned by Christians. Human rights groups in Pakistan allege that according to video footage of the incident that has gone viral, the police didn't intervene for some time and allowed the violence to perpetrate (Reuters, 2024). However, according to some sources, in the aftermath, the police have booked in a FIR, 450 persons and arrested 25 (News 18, 2024). The Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), a radical group, has claimed responsibility for the violence.

Over the years, the TLP has been successful in radicalising Pakistani youth, particularly in the Punjab Province, and has made inroads into electoral politics in the country. Unfortunately, such incidents of anti-Christian violence are not isolated occurrences. The blasphemy laws in Pakistan are instrumentalised to target innocent Christians and Hindus, as noted by human rights organisations and civil society. This incident echoes one of the most severe attacks on Christians in Pakistan

in August 2023, when mobs burned churches and assaulted dozens in Jaranwala, Punjab province, after allegations of desecration of the Quran as in other similar cases in the past.

The persecution of Christians in Pakistan is deeply concerning. The Inter-Religious Solidarity Council (IRSC) in Mumbai strongly condemns this attack and urges the Pakistani authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice swiftly. The state should act decisively against TLP. Additionally, it calls upon the authorities to ensure protection and equality of Christians in Pakistan to prevent the recurrence of such tragic events.

Irfan Engineer, Stanley Fernandez and 11 Others, IRSC

Dalits Shift Allegiance

In the latest elections, BJP faced setbacks in the Lok Sabha seats reserved for Scheduled Castes in Uttar Pradesh, winning only eight out of 17 reserved seats. The Samajwadi Party, Congress, and Azad Samaj Party secured the remaining nine seats. Political analysts attribute the shift to promises made by the INDIA bloc.

Political analysts are pointing to effective campaigning by the INDIA bloc, promising benefits such as jobs, unemployment allowances, and protection of the Constitution as key reasons behind the shift.

In stark contrast, the BJP had secured a one-sided victory in these seats during the 2014 elections. However, its dominance started to wane in 2019, and the latest results have further raised questions about its strategy in managing these crucial seats.

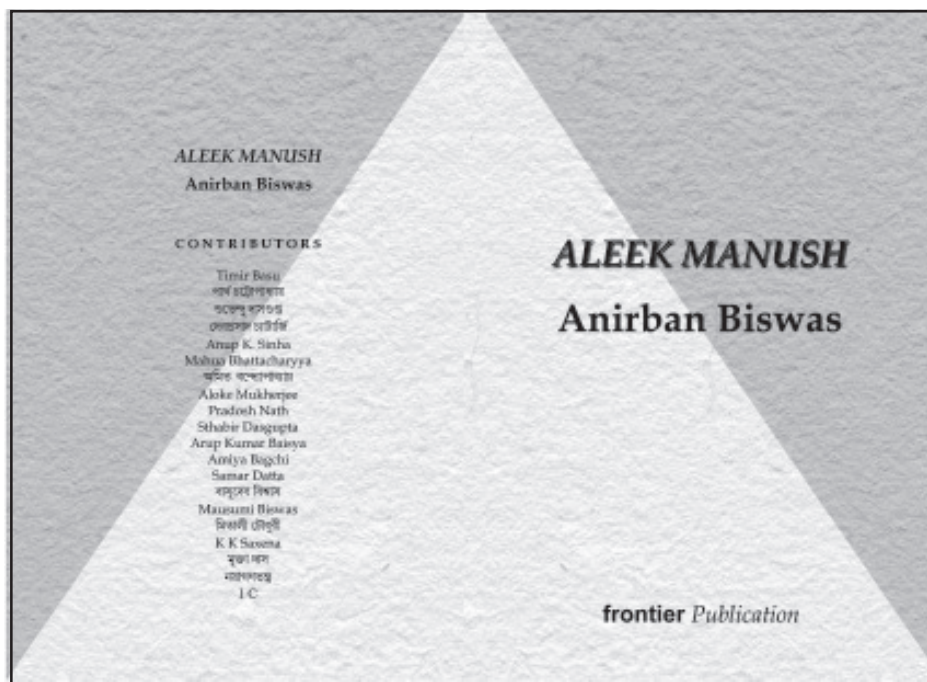
The performance of the INDIA bloc highlights a growing political influence, indicating a shift in the Dalit community's allegiance. The focus on promising immediate benefits and safety nets seems to have struck a chord with the electorate.

This election outcome has left the BJP reeling, with party insiders acknowledging that their assumptions regarding Dalit votes were misguided.

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