

Preface

The 2024 Lok Sabha electoral mandate was a game changer in Indian politics. With the universal diffusion of information and Communication technologies majority of the electorates were aware about the achievements and failures of political parties. This made political parties more responsible and responsive to the electorate. Above 65 percent Indian population is of younger generation who are tech savvy and comfortable to use social media networks. This generation is quite open for their future opportunities and also believe in meritocracy in politics. People of India have become more aspirational. People have become more conscious and within this prevailing situation they became more vigilant which is good for the democratic system.

The 2024 elections were announced in the shadow of a governance insecurity created by the Covid pandemic and subsequent economic slow down all over the world. Many electoral pundits were predicting that due to low economic performance perhaps Modi government will be missing a third chance.

The results were shocking for all those forecasters. As per the results BJP got 240 seats of its own and became single largest party but lacked 33 seats to touch magical number of 273. In 2014, under the leadership of PM Modi, BJP broke 30 years old records when it got 282 seats by its own with 31 percent popular votes. The party increased its tally to 303 in 2019 general election with impressive 37 percent votes. In 2024 general election, BJP got 240 seats, 63 less than its 2019 number of 303 but at the same time received 36.6 percentage of votes polled. PM Modi came into power at the centre in 2014 and before that he was the chief minister of western Indian state of Gujarat for 13 long years. It means that since 2001, Modi has not lost any election.

Despite all odds and campaigns common man was convinced that Modi has taken many positive steps for the actual development of the country. Honesty and transparency remained hallmark of Modi-1 and 2 and remains convincing factor for the electorate. Another important aspects was compliance to the idea of good governance. Modi government in its first term has ensured that beneficiary will get the earmarked amount directly in their bank accounts curtailing older system where the nexus of Bank staff and local political oligarchy were eating sizeable portion

of the money. Adoption of technology has ensured that money reaches directly into the account of beneficiaries.

Modi government launched many flagship schemes like Ujjawala, Jan Dhan, Pradhanmantri Sadak Yojina, Drinking water, Ayushman for health care , Housing for the poor etc. in its first and second term. These programmes has by and large reached to the poorest of the poor therefore it could be safely stated that good governance has become the backbone of Modi's return for 3rd time in row. This is unique given the history of elections in India since independence. Modi became the 2nd Indian PM to return as PM for a third time in row after Jawaharlal Nehru.

2024 Lok-Sabha election marked the completion of 75th year of Indian democracy. During this period, Indian democracy has sustained, thrived and also became an example for others to emulate. However inflation and unemployment remained an issue for the voters in 2024 election. There was anxiety about inflation and unemployment and there was anger on the ground. The CSDS-Lokniti pre-poll survey is a testament to the fact that unemployment and price rise were concerns of the voters.¹

After 2024 Lok-Sabha verdict, opposition has emerged stronger with 234 seats which is largest opposition number since 2009 Lok-Sabha election. This unexpected performance of the opposition has demolished their allegation that EVM machines are manipulated by the party in power. In 2024 Lok-Sabha election, BJP got roughly 37 percent vote which was similar to 2019 BJP vote percentage of 37.36 percent but given the prevailing fact that in 2024 Lok-Sabha election BJP got 36.56 percent. BJP vote percentage reduced a bit and somehow it has sustained 2019 vote percentage. Opposition gets united and their supporters voted them unitedly and that has contributed immensely to reduce BJP seats. According to the Election Commission of India, 98.06 crore overall voters were eligible to vote in 2024 election.² 642 million participated in 2024 election, 312 million were women, the highest ever participation in the electoral history of India.³ The INDIA alliance got 234 Lok-Sabha seats and its largest constituents, Congress got 99 seats which was best performance of the Congress and the alliance since 2009 Lok-Sabha election.⁴

2024 Lok-Sabha results has brought a big lesson for the ruling and opposition. For the ruling party, the lesson is to remain humble and for the opposition the lesson is to believe in democratic system and institutions. Omar Abdullah is an example. He lost 2024 Lok-Sabha election from Baramula seat of Kashmir but humbly accepted it. His

National Conference came into power in October 2024 assembly election. But he never alleged that EVM has been tampered. As rightly stated by Omar Abdullah, CM of Jammu and Kashmir

“You can't accept election results when you win, and blame EVMs when you lose.”.⁵

Omar Abdullah National Conference is in alliance with the Congress party for Assembly election and a constituent of the INDIA block and fought Lok-Sabha and Assembly election together. Surprisingly TMC which is ruling party in West Bengal and has a history of bitter political relationship with the BJP also supported Omar Abdullah's view on the EVM.

Transparency and honesty remain important factors in politics and Modi was successful in creating a perception in public at large that PM Modi is honest and trying his level best to ensure all round development of the country.⁶

Modi government organised G-20 Summit at New Delhi in September 2023. It was very successful and through it, India has demonstrated its new earned aura at the global table of governance. The G 20 Summit convinced the world that there is a decisive leadership dedicated to ensure India's position among the community of nations. During PM Modi's first term, India's standing at the global level has also accelerated and that is also taken positively by the common people. Majority of political analyst and researcher failed to read the writings on the wall. Against all odds Modi led BJP got a smart electoral victory. It is true that BJP lost massively in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and marginally lost West Bengal and few other smaller states. But it has formed its first ever state government in the eastern state of Odisha and won 20 out of 21 total Lok-Sabha seats in the state.

After 1984 it is maiden occasion that an incumbent government has returned into power with the same leadership and even with the swelling majority. This has happened after a long twenty five years of coalition era (1989-2014). The people of India get frustrated with the non performing nature of these coalitions. During this coalition period the ruling parties gave least importance to governance and concentrated on parochial issues to sustain their power. They forget that they have been given the mandate for the governance because, poor of the poorest remains largest beneficiary of good governance and transparent government. This has been duly taken as a lesson by PM Narendra Modi and he ensured that fruits of welfare measures must reach to the needy people in a transparent mode and in majority of cases his flagship schemes have been successful to ensure benefit to the people who were really hapless.

The election mandate reminds that governments must concentrate to develop the capacity of our poor people instead of disbursing free commodities to them. Global experience has demonstrated that ultimately this freebie tendency become detrimental to the concerned economies .

Another major concern in this context is secularism. Since independence the perception was created by some forces that Muslims are not common Indian and they are being appeased on many flimsy grounds. Former PM, Dr. Manmohan Singh stated once that minorities have their first right over the resources. Some major political parties adopted appeasement of the Muslim community and peak of this line of politics was Sahbano case. Eminent politician, Arif Mohmmad Khan opposed Congress attitude in Sahbano case and finally resigned from Rajiv Gandhi cabinet. Khan showed unique nature of political values which is rarest in our polity. Instead of promoting Arif Mohamed Khan as an epitome of modernity, Congress chooses to sustain appeasement policy for the Muslims and forced Khan to resign from Rajiv Gandhi cabinet. This incident was the beginning of a transformative period in Indian politics and Congress slipped on electoral wicket since then. It should also be noted that internal modernisation has not taken place in the Muslim community due to many prevailing issues and it remains far backward. It was candidly elaborated by Sachhar commission (2006) which was constituted by UPA-1 government (2004-2009) led by Dr Manmohan Singh. The report reveals that Muslims are very much backward and on many developmental counts are at par with the scheduled caste. Since independence, Congress party garnered Muslims support but never gave adequate attention towards their genuine development. Muslims are an integral parts and parcel of Indian nation and they must exercise their vote as Indians and not as a community and this formula applies to all the communities. Democracy believes in diversity in all spheres and diversity of voting pattern incudes within this parameter.

BJP was established in 1980 after the fall of Janta party government (1977-1980). From 1989 general elections, BJP started upward electoral journey and crossed 100 marks in Lok-Sabha in 1991 and since then have not gone down from 100 seats. The Indian politics of 90's witnessed accelerated growth of caste and other parochial issues based regional parties. SP, BSP, RJD, JMM, DMK, AIDMK, TDP, AIMIM, TMC, JD-U etc comes within this category. They have ruled major states of Bihar, U.P, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand many times since 1990. Their growth coincided with the weakness of the congress party

in these states. These parties adopted the same tactics to garner Muslims votes as was adopted by the congress since independence. They garnered Muslims votes in these crucial states on anti BJP plank. In the meanwhile, they have forgotten that the people of these states are also aspiring good governance for which they gave negligible attention. This appeasement policy upset majority of the people and through compliance of 'Sabka Saath, Saabka Vikas' PM Modi led BJP provided basic amenities to the common people without any discrimination.

Congress party has ruled India and its majority of states since independence. Congress party must learn lessons from the electoral history that when it was its peck, regional parties were their bigger enemies. these parties share common vote bank with the Congress. Gradually the voters will be used to exercise their votes for regional parties and it will further shrink the electoral might of the Congress party. Congress could not return as ruling party at the centre with the regional and communist parties' agenda.

2024 Lok-Sabha election is an eye opener for the Congress. People of India has given 99 seats to the Congress; it must perform as per the expectations of the people. It must throw its negative attitude and must use parliament as a forum to give adequate voice to the people's woes. Congress party must understand that today's politics has become aspirational and old tricks are not able to give it adequate electoral dividends.

2024 mandate is another opportunity for PM Modi to further consolidate his perception as a ruler who cares poor people. In his 1st and 2nd tenure he has done transformative work in all the sectors. India is many rounds bigger than Europe in terms of population. Our younger demography is an asset and providing them due skill will make India further stronger. All branches of our army need to be upgraded in terms of equipment's and that requires strong will power and enormous resources given the prevailing twin looming strategic threat emancipating from China and Pakistan.

Regional parties must also abide with the governance and merely empty slogans are not going to pay them rich electoral dividends. BJD electoral cleansing in Odisha speaks a lot about it. Left parties must introspect that since 2014 why they are not able to win even traditional seats. They have to understand the aspirations of the people. Mere old and outdated ideological positions are not going to pay electoral dividends. Left parties must understand the prevailing socio-economic churning which has happened in post globalised India.

Governance has become an important factor of voting behaviour. It is positive for our thriving democracy. Present issue of the journal is intended to look into diverse facets of 2024 mandate. Papers included in this issue shed holistic light on those pertinent issues.

Finally, 2024 Lok-Sabha election has underlined the maturity of Indian democracy which has not only been sustained itself but also thrived. It is vindicated with a paper published by Chatham House

“The election result has highlighted the strength and resilience of India’s democracy and arguably reaffirmed its secular credentials.”⁷

Democracy has become real winner. Opposition also got more seats than their expectation. People of India will now watch both ruling and opposition through their efforts to strengthen the country. Both ruling and opposition must understand candidly that people are the real custodian of Indian democracy and once again they have proved it through 2024 mandate.

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Reference

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