WORDLY WISE

COMMUNISM IS NOT LOVE. COMMUNISM IS A HAMMER WHICH WE USE TO CRUSH THE ENEMY.

— MAO ZEDONG

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

WEIGHT OF WORDS

PM strikes the right notes. His party needs to hear there will be no impunity for those who make the wrong noise

N HIS speech in Central Hall in Parliament on Saturday, the first after being elected leader of the BJP-led NDA, Prime Minister Narendra Modi struck a heartening note of magnanimity. Among other things, he said the new government would make efforts to earn the trust of minorities, and of those who disagree (with the BJP-NDA). He urged the newly elected MPs to puncture the "myth" or illusion of fear among the country's minorities: "The way the poor have been cheated, the minorities have been deceived the same way...". He spoke of owning even those who express strong opposition to the BJP, "jo hamara ghor virodh karte hain, woh bhi hamare hain". These are statements of inclusive intent. But it will take more for them to reassure.

PM Modi's words will need to be heeded by his own partymen and Sangh Parivar footsoldiers, who will need to acknowledge both what the PM said and didn't say: Minority fears and insecurities are real, they are no illusion or myth. Admittedly, they are a grave, throbbing left-over from the deceptions and abdications of earlier governments that called themselves secular. But, in the last five years, they have been made up of, and stoked by, a majoritarianism unleashed and emboldened by the NDA victory of 2014. This "us versus them" strain, deepened by the top BJP leadership's silences and complicities, was also mirrored in its 2019 campaign: Be it party president Amit Shah calling (the mostly Muslim) Bangladeshi immigrants "termites", or PM Modi himself referring to Rahul Gandhi's decision to contest from Wayanad in Kerala as an escape to a minority (as opposed to a majority dominated) constituency, or the BJP's choice, endorsed by its top two leaders, of Sadhvi Pragya Thakur as the candidate from Bhopal. It may well be that campaigning is different from governing in the second term. It could be that the overwhelming mandate of 2019 — ironically, facilitated by this kind of rhetoric— makes room for generosity and inclusiveness of the kind that could be heard in the PM's first speech to his MPs. But it will need constant mindfulness from the top BJP leadership.

It will have to own the responsibility to curb the party's worst instincts vis a vis minorities and those who disagree with it. The next time a BJP MP or MLA resorts to hate speech, or justifies mob violence, the next time the party uses its mandate as a weapon to disrespect the political opponent or subdue the autonomous institution, they will need to be told that there are penalties to pay. Going ahead, at the very least, there must be no impunity for flouting the PM's words on the Saturday after he won a famous mandate.

LEFT ADRIFT

The communists once wielded influence out of proportion with their numbers. Now, they are in retreat on both fronts

he communist parties have plumbed the nadir in the general elections, with just five seats in the Lok Sabha — four in Tamil Nadu, one in Kerala and absolutely none in West Bengal and Tripura, their former strongholds in the east. Apart from the numbers, the influence that they had wielded in national affairs and policymaking has also dwindled to nothing. Once upon a time, they could claim to provide the moral armature of Manmohan Singh's government, highlighting welfare and deploying the work of academics loyal to the cause for leverage in steering policy. That was before they let their anti-Americanism get the better of their political sense and withdrew support to the government over the Indo-US nuclear deal, a decision they were unable to explain to the electorate. That misadventure alone would have sapped the energy of the cadre in less committed parties, but it was not the first. In 1996, to the dismay of the troops, the Politburo had prevented Jyoti Basu from becoming prime minister of the United Front government. And in 2008, Somnath Chatterjee was expelled by the CPM for being more loyal to Parliament than to his party.

Ever since, the left has been almost shouldered off the electoral field and had retreated to the groves of academe. It ventured out of that safe haven this year to do combat in Begusarai, and lost one of the most closely watched contests. This would only embolden the BJP to proceed with its declared project to clear universities of left influence. Of course, success in this initiative would also deprive it of a pet peeve, that it had been excluded from academia and the writing of history by left-wing intellectuals. But that would be a small price to pay, now that it has demonstrated its electoral prowess beyond doubt.

The left movement has lost relevance because it is overtaken and outclassed. Its politics is based on the notion of class, whose contours have changed over time. Historically, it was also hamstrung by its decision to interpret caste through the lens of class. It doesn't really matter any more, because Hindu pride may have, in many ways, trumped caste, too, in this election. The eclipse of the left may be a historical necessity, but which party is capable of filling the moral vacuum it will leave behind – its commitment to welfare, and to the centrality of the poorest? That question lingers on.

FREEZE FRAME

EPUNNY



Transfiguring India

Are we on the path to a Hindu Rashtra? Much will depend on how the electoral verdict is read by the victor

ASHUTOSH VARSHNEY

EVERY ELECTION outcome has two aspects: The statistical and the interpretative. Once the results are out, the purely statistical side has few mysteries to offer, unless we enter the complicated terrain of statistical inference. Basically, data show who won and who lost, revealing also the scale of victories and defeats. The interpretative side, however, is another matter. It is, among other things, about meanings. What does the victory signify? Here we enter an analytically — and politically — embattled domain.

So what does Narendra Modi's huge elec-

tion victory mean? My formulation of the question should indicate that I am ascribing the victory primarily to Modi, not to the BJP. The situation is quite akin to the US, if not identical. Nearly all observers say that the Republican party is no longer what it used to be. It is Donald trump's party today. It would not be a stretch to make an analogical claim about the BJP. Although Trump is a maverick who was never part of the Republican party organization and rose to the top within a few months of primary campaigns and Modi worked assiduously at the lower rungs of the party before capturing its summit, the BJP is undoubtedly Modi's party today, with Amit Shah as an intensely loyal deputy. The Vajpayee-Advani-Joshi era no longer exists. Vajpayee gave interviews to newspapers, saying that he was not in agreement with Lal Krishna Advani on the Ayodhya movement and therefore did not support it. No leading political figure of BJP today has demonstrated the courage to articulate disagreements with Modi. Those who did so were not political heavyweights and never received the support of the RSS. They were just ignored by the party. When Modi says he is a chowkidar (watchman), all party members also call themselves chowkidars. The subservience is unmistakable.

One could suggest that the election verdict was about the electorate's comparative assessment of Rahul Gandhi and Narendra Modi as leaders, and people chose Modi over Rahul. The fact that the election became semi-Presidential lends some weight to this argument. A lot of commentary has presented Rahul as a hapless combination of sincerity and ineptitude. With considerable decency, he repeatedly spoke of love as a way to

There is no doubt in my mind that for the ideologues of the BJP and RSS, including the highest rungs of leadership, not simply the so-called fringe, this election has endorsed the project of

Hindu nationalism namely, the creation of a Hindu majoritarian state and polity. How else can one interpret the victory of Pragya Thakur, a terror accused and someone who hailed Mahatma Gandhi's assassin as a hero and a patriot? How else can one understand Amit Shah's claim that Muslim migrants from Bangladesh or Myanmar were "termites" and he would throw out all immigrants except those who were Hindus,

Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains?

counter hatred. But this Gandhian line uneasily coexisted with his unremitting anti-Modi slogan, chowkidar chor hai (the watchman is a thief). It is also clear that the slogan was not working. Yet he persisted, diluting the other aspects of his campaign, such as unemployment and agrarian distress.

It is also said that Rahul Gandhi's idea of NYAY came too late — and in much too cluttered a form. The masses simply could not comprehend what it was all about. While this is true, another argument is worthy of consideration. NYAY might have been ethically compelling, but it was politically unwise. India is increasingly becoming a middle-class society and the focus on the bottom 20 per cent, which is what NYAY was about, was irrelevant to the vastly larger middle classes, carrying many more votes than the absolute poor. In the end, he did not get the vote of the poor and also lost much of the middle class vote. The ethical desirability and political rationality were directly in clash.

But was this election primarily about economic issues? Modi chose to relegate them to a peripheral status. Instead, he concentrated on national security and nationalism - relentlessly, unerringly, vociferously. And if that is so, shouldn't national security and nationalism be viewed as the principal determinants of the election outcome?

One should here note that while most election results are shaped by multiple factors, what an election means is something quite distinct. Even if we can't prove with data what turned the election, the question of how the meaning of the election would be interpreted — and used — is inevitably a political issue. Politicians don't wait for analysts to settle the relative significance of various factors. They go ahead and use the victory in a way suitable to them. They do whatever it takes to win, but once in power, the ideological project often takes over.

Here lies the great danger of this election victory. There is no doubt in my mind that for the ideologues of the BJP and RSS, including the highest rungs of leadership, not simply the so-called fringe, this election has endorsed the project of Hindu nationalism – namely, the creation of a Hindu majoritarian state and polity. How else can one interpret the victory of Pragya Thakur, a terror accused and someone who hailed Mahatma Gandhi's assassin as a hero and a patriot? How else can one understand Amit Shah's claim that Muslim migrants from Bangladesh or Myanmar were "termites" and he would throw out all immigrants except those who were Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Jain? How does one read Modi's critique that Rahul Gandhi's choice of Wayanad as a second constituency was because the minorities were a majority there, as if Muslims and Christians are not citizens equal to the Hindus? Even more ominously, how else can one comprehend Modi's statement in his victory speech on May 23rd that these elections have disempowered, and exposed the deceitful claims of, secularists (is chunaav ne secularists ko benaqab kar diya hai – ab wo desh ko gumraah nahin kar sakte)? A solitary later speech seeking the trust (vishvaas) of minorities is simply not enough.

Since the lynchings began in 2015-16, one encounters a lot of scared Muslims in India There was a time when mainstream politics under Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi used to claim that Muslim anxieties and fears were our anxieties and fears. The whole nation needed to deal with them. There might have been riots, as there certainly were, especially during Indira Gandhi's reign, but from the top rungs of the polity, the claim was never that secular protections for minorities, constitutionally legitimated, were either deceitful lies or detrimental to national health and strength. Since 2014, this argument has disappeared from the corridors of power. This election gives a thunderous push to this ongoing process.

If this interpretation of the meaning of 2019 elections is right, a transfigured India possibly awaits us. The metamorphosis is not certain but, with an enhanced majority for the BJP, it is likely. Equally probable, the pursuit of Hindu rashtra will be painful and deeply unsettling.

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SPOILER ALERT

Because we don't need to know what comes next

KAIF SIDDIQUI

IN THE WORLD of popular entertainment, April and May marked the release of Marvel Studios' billion-dollar superhero movie Avengers: Endgame, as well as the final season of HBO's medieval fantasy series, Game of Thrones (GoT). Arguably two of the biggest entertainment spectacles of the decade, social media was, and still is, abuzz with discussions about both — the stories, their characters, fan theories. And spoilers.

Endgame is the final chapter of the Avengers series of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, which began in 2008. GoT premiered with its first season in 2011, as a television adaptation of George Martin's longrunning series of novels A Song of Ice and Fire. Both are stories carefully crafted over the years. There are similarities between the marketing campaigns for both franchises, featuring interviews with the cast, and special trailers. Both have also developed passionate fan-bases across the world. However, what is noteworthy, is the extreme lengths that the creators went to, in order to avoid getting the story out before its scheduled date/time. Marvel Studios intentionally loaded their trailers for Endgame with scenes that were out of context. They even included scenes which are not even a part of the final movie. Meanwhile, the creators of GoT deliberately shot multiple endings and fake scenes to throw off leakers.

Now, the fact that nearly anyone who



A VOICE, UNDER 35

Visiting fictional worlds with fictional characters draws people in, allowing them to forget their own worries, if only for a brief while. However, spoilers seek to ruin this attachment a person can have with make-believe worlds. They ruin the joy of watching a story unravel, the palpable excitement that comes with not knowing what comes next.

has any inkling of popular culture knows about Avengers and GoT makes it difficult to avoid conversations about them. Even those who haven't watched the movies or the series are familiar with Iron Man, Thor, Arya Stark or Tyrion Lannister. Therefore, when *Endgame* and *GoT* released — very close to each other's release dates — it started a race amongst the fans to either keep up or get their viewing experience spoiled. The internet and social media further complicate things. There is an entire category of trolls online, on social media especially, who delight in spreading popular culture spoilers. They are commonly found on Facebook and in the YouTube comments section, talking about plot twists and character deaths that were actually supposed to be a surprise for

This extreme obsession with spoilers is, in fact, a hallmark of the 21st century. It is not just the trolls, though, who hide behind the safety of their anonymity. We all have people around us — family, friends and colleagues - who derive great pleasure in intentionally spoiling movies and TV series for others. Some individuals even go to great lengths of personally messaging people with spoilers. For many, this behaviour may not be a serious transgression — it's just a movie and a TV show, but, the fact that this is commonplace, raises questions about how little we value art and entertainment. People who give out

spoilers don't see that these stories — unbelievable as they may be — can help people escape reality for a while. Visiting fictional worlds with fictional characters draws people in, allowing them to forget their own worries, if only for a brief while.

However, spoilers seek to ruin this attachment a person can have with make-believe worlds. They ruin the joy of watching a story unravel, the palpable excitement that comes with not knowing what comes next. Some say that spoilers actually enhance, or that they don't really affect the viewing experience. Some also say that knowing what's ahead helps one to analyse the story better as a whole. But, is it healthy to start off with a critical analysis even before your first viewing? The first viewing is when one should absorb the story as the creator intended it to be. Repeat viewings provide ample opportunities to dissect every minute element of a narrative. The element of surprise, which is always unique to the first viewing, must be respected. Of course, all forms of art and expression are inherently subjective and everyone feels differently about them. But, for all the books, movies and television series around us, each of which means something to someone, the least we can do is help people enjoy what they love.

> The writer, 21, is a law student at Aligarh Muslim University

May 27, 1979, Forty Years Ago



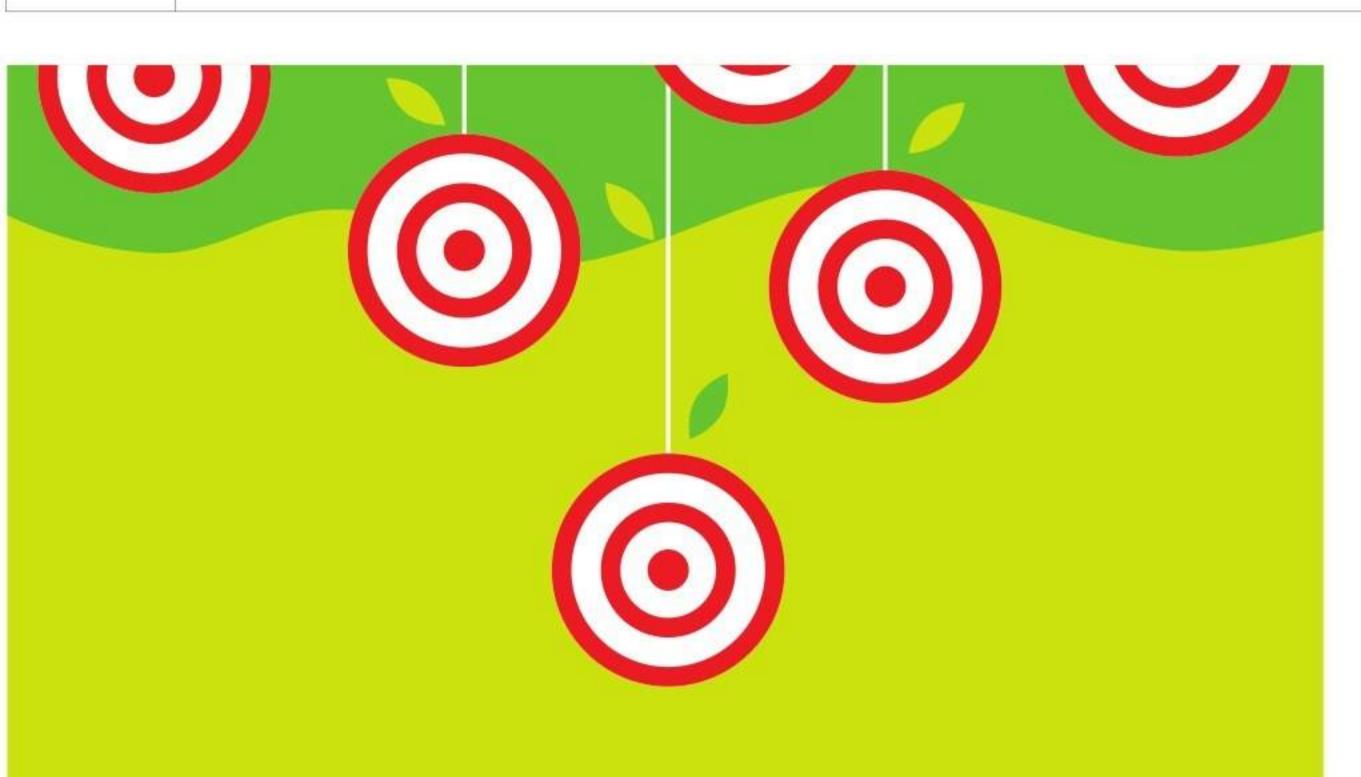
L N MISHRA INQUIRY VMTARKUNDE has in a sensational report to the Bihar government said that the CBI inquiry into the murder of LN Mishra was "deliberately abandoned, indeed sabotaged, probably at the instance of Mrs Indira Gandhi" when evidence began to point to the murder having been planned by Ram Bilas Jha, a Bihar MOLC at the time and a close associate of Yashpal Kapoor. The CBI inquiry was abandoned in March 1975, barely two months after the murder. Tarakunde has recommended a fresh probe. The report has been submitted to the prime minister by the Bihar government with the request that the Centre should take appropriate action.

US AIR CRASH

AN AMERICAN AIRLINES widebodied jet loaded with 270 holiday travellers crashed nose first and broke apart in flames yesterday just after take-off from O'Hare International Airport. Authorities said all aboard were killed in the worst air disaster in US history. The bodies of the persons on board the jet were strewn over a wide area. They planted high wooden stakes with flags on them to mark parts of bodies. Two persons, identified as Andrew Bellavia, 46, and Riohard Masker, 28, were taken alive from the scene to hospital. Both were working in the area where the crash occurred. A temporary morgue was set up at an American Airlines hangar at O'Hare. Chicago police sent six paddy wagons to help remove bodies.

TRADERS' VIOLENCE THE UP GOVERNMENT has decided to curb with an iron hand the tendency among certain "belligerent" sections of the trading community to take the law into its hands as reflected in the incident in Aminabad in Uttar Pradesh. The state government has taken a stern view of the incident in which a section of traders obstructed officers of the Sales Tax Department in performing their duty, gheraoed and attacked the police station, indulged in hurling bricks and also set ablaze a postal van and three government vehicles.

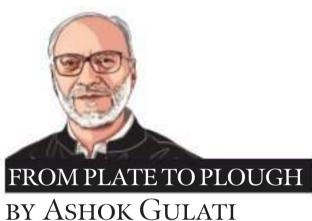
THE IDEAS PAGE



CR Sasikumar

First, the low-hanging fruit

The new government should set up a body along the lines of the GST Council to reform the agri-marketing system



KUDOS TO PRIME Minister Narendra Modi, BJP President Amit Shah and their battery of dedicated karyakartas (party workers) for the BJP's historic victory in the Lok Sabha elections. Despite a few intemperate speeches during the campaign, the elections, on the whole, make us feel proud of our democracy.

Political pundits are sure to analyse why economic factors, including demonetisation, the GST's teething problems, slow growth of industry, rural distress and joblessness, did not have a bearing on the outcome of the elections. But one thing seems clear: Indians prefer a "strong" prime minister. In some sense, the BJP's victory is a victory of the Modi brand — the party's election pitch, after all, centred on the prime minister.

With victory in his pocket, what should PM Modi deliver to the nation? First and foremost, perhaps, humility is the need of the hour. The PM needs to go back to his 2014 election slogan, 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'. In his "thank you" speech, he gave a welcome indication of doing so: PM Modi mentioned that he will forget the bitterness of the election campaign and work with all the states and parties, without any ill will. That is reassuring.

Second, the PM has to hit the ground running on the economy. The macro-economy is facing headwinds. Industry is in the doldrums and agriculture is in poor shape. The prime minister has no time to rest because expectations from him have soared even

We focus here on the agri-food sector and discuss agri-marketing, a low-hanging fruit. In subsequent pieces, we will focus on more demanding aspects of agriculture.

In 2016, PM Modi gave a clarion call to double farmers' real incomes by 2022-23. At that time, the timeframe for that task was seven years and it required a growth rate of 10.4 per cent per annum. Three years have passed and one does not see any acceleration in farmers' incomes compared to the trend line of 3.7 per cent during 2002-03 to 2015-16. So, in the remaining four years, PM Modi has to increase the farmers' real incomes by 13 to 15 per cent per annum. This seems almost impossible with the set of policies he has followed in the last five years. Agri-marketing reforms, therefore, should be the top priority in the government's agriculture agenda.

PM Modi has to ensure that the Model Agricultural Produce and Livestocks Marketing Act of 2017 is implemented by all the states, in letter and spirit. Just sending a letter to the states will not ensure effective implementation. Such an approach was attempted by the late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2003 but it remained largely on paper. Recent attempts to implement the Act in Maharashtra show how strong the opposition to it is by mandi commission agents and other vested interests.

If PM Modi is serious about reforming agriculture, he needs to urgently set up an Agri-marketing Reforms Council (AMRC), on the lines of the GST Council, to carry out agrimarketing reforms in states in a synchronised manner. This is a low-hanging fruit and can be harvested in the next six to 12 months. This council will also have to review and prune the Essential Commodities Act of 1955, revamp the livestock marketing and the warehouse receipt systems and revitalise

the agri-futures markets. The agri-vision for New India should be based on building competitive and inclusive value chains for several products, on the lines of AMUL's model for milk. Food processors, organised retailers and agri-exporters should be encouraged to bypass the mandi system and buy directly from farmers' groups. The AMRC should be led by the Union agriculture minister, who should be supported by the chief ministers of the agriculturally-important states. The experience gained in implementing the GST reforms should be tapped.

PM Modi needs to give the agriculture portfolio to someone who is well respected for his understanding of farm-related matters and can also carry his voice in the Cabinet. The only sustainable and efficient way to ensure remunerative prices for farmers is through structural reforms in agri-marketing. The path of higher minimum support prices (MSPs), based on cost A2+FL as announced for 23 commodities, has serious limitations because it bypasses the demand side of the equation. The grain stock with the Food Corporation of India and NAFED is already higher than the buffer stock norms of these commodities.

In this context, lessons from China could, perhaps, be of some use. After 2008, China increased the MSPs of key commodities such as rice, wheat, corn and cotton significantly. China's list of MSP commodities is smaller than ours (we have 23 commodities under MSP). The stocks of grain with the government system in China touched almost 300 million tonnes, leading to massive inefficiency. From 2016 onwards, China set out to reform its agri-pricing support system. First, the MSP support for corn was withdrawn, then the government's cotton procurement was reduced and now the MSP for wheat has been reduced. Interestingly, and simultaneously, China moved from price support operations to direct income support on a per acre basis. In 2016-17 alone, China gave direct income support of 21 billion dollars to its farmers.

Seen this way, PM Modi's move toward a direct income support scheme for farmers is a step in the right direction. If he ensures this shift is one from price policy to income policy and reforms the current agri-marketing system, he will have effected a fundamental structural reform in agriculture with high pay offs in the years to come.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"All Chinese companies wishing to get to the high-tech mountaintop should learn from Huawei's composed example."

— GLOBAL TIMES CHINA

Keep the faith

Minorities must repose trust in Constitution, majority must recognise them as equal stakeholders



Tahir Mahmood

"PLEASE PRAY TO God for India, that is Bharat" a Sikh friend — a former judge messaged me at dawn on May 23, the day of election results. "No use, God superannuated long ago and relieved himself of the job of listening to the prayers of the faithful", I instantly replied. I sent both his text and my response to a Muslim friend, a former state dignitary, who wrote back: "The Creator has other worlds to look after, why waste efforts on a wayward creation." To my query "which other worlds, the heaven and hell where he is taking care of the houries for the believers and readying fire and filth for others", he kept mum.

The comments I made reflected my alienation from religion as a whole owing to the inhumanities and communal polarisation it has bred in recent times. The remarks of the other two echoed simmering discontent among the minorities of the country, including their elites, with the recent political landscape. I hate sermonising but I have reproduced these dialogues as a prelude to offering some suggestions, unsolicited of course, to both the rulers and the ruled.

For the minorities, I am reproducing some verses of an eminent Urdu poet, Jagannath Azad: Bharat ke Musalman kyon hai tu pareshan/ Bharat ka tu farzand hai begana nahin hai/ Ye desh tera ghar hai tu iss ghar ka makin hai/ Meri hi tarah hai ye gulistaan tera bhi/ Iss khak ka har zarra-etaban hai tera bhi/ Ham sab ki tamannaon ko phalna bhi yahin hai/ Har manzil-emushkil se guzarna bhi yahin hai/ Jeena bhi yahin hai hamen marna bhi yahin hai.

(Muslims of India, why are you so upset, you are the children of India not aliens, it's your home, you are its co-owners, like mine this garden is yours too, every shining particle of this land is yours too. All of us have to realise our aspirations here, brave all kinds of difficult times here, live and die just here).

Every word of this poetic gem composed by the great non-Muslim poet after the country's unfortunate division, when the Muslims refusing to migrate to the other side of the artificially created borders were facing difficult times, is extremely relevant for the community at this political juncture. They have to accept the ground reality, reconcile with the situation and cooperate with the rulers of the day. There is no wisdom in committing the proverbial blunder of "darya mein reh ke magarmachh se bair" (making an enemy of a crocodile, while living in

The rulers of the day, basking in the glory of an unprecedented electoral victory, and their ardent admirers, must also realise that the 250 million-strong minorities of India are equal citizens of the country. They are as patriotic as the one billionstrong majority. A fairly large number of citizens from the minority communities have already voted for the ruling dispensation. Winning over the rest of the community too — not by undue appeasement but by implementing on the ground their human and constitutional rights — will make the regime a force to reckon with. But to achieve this, it is necessary to shun the political culture of hate speeches which, though strictly prohibited by law, are a favourite pastime for politicians of all hues.

The proper course of action that needs to be pursued by the jubilant majority, and the disgruntled minorities, is to shun morbid religiosity and accept the apex court's injunction that genuine religious beliefs have to be distinguished from superstitions (Durgah Committee, Ajmer v Syed Hussain Ali, SC, 1961). The truth and equality of all religions alike must be accepted and religious sentiments of all must be respected. But that should happen within the parameters set by the Constitution which clarifies that professing, practising and propagating religion is assured but subject to morality, health and public order, and that religious freedom shall be no hindrance for introducing necessary "social welfare and reform" (Article 25).

may be following, must also fulfill their fundamental duties under the Constitution "to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom; promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture; and develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform' (Article 51A).

All citizens, whichever religion they

After the bitter and vicious electioneering, what columnist V Mitchell of The New York Times observed in a 2014 article is worth pondering over by all Indians — the majority and the minorities, the rulers and the ruled alike: "It is truly the greatest show on earth, an ode to a diverse and democratic ethos where 700 million of humanity vote providing their small part in directing their ancient civilisation into the future. Its challenges are immense, more so than anywhere else. It is even more astounding that the most diverse nation on earth with all religions and cultures is not only surviving but thriving. The nation where Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism were born, which is the second largest Muslim nation on earth, where Christianity has existed for 2000 years, where Zoroastrians have thrived since being thrown out of their homeland; where three Muslim Presidents have been elected, where a President was also a woman, succeeding a Muslim President who was a rocket scientist and a revered hero of the nation. Where all this is happening is India and it is an inspiration to the entire world."

This perception of an independent foreign journalist about our great nation, which has to be maintained at any cost, must infuse patriotic pride in the hearts of — to use the opening words of our Constitution — "We the people of India" as a whole. It must remind us of its diktat that all of us must "abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions" — Article 51A (a).

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VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

The agri-vision for New

India should be based on

building competitive and

inclusive value chains for

several products, on the lines

of AMUL's model for milk.

Food processors, organised

retailers and agri-exporters

should be encouraged to

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and buy directly from

farmers' groups.

ELECTION REACTION

THE TONE of the editorials in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi press show a marked difference — and some similarities — in the way they have reacted to Narendra Modi and the BJP's landslide victory in the Lok Sabha elections. The May 26 editorial in *Dawn asks*: "What is Mr Modi's mandate and how would he interpret it?" The editorial examines, with maturity and in some detail, some of the more controversial and disturbing aspects of the polls. "There are worries about the election of Sadhvi Pragya, an accused in a terror plot but out on bail. Having lauded Mahatma Gandhi's killer, it is evident, that she would be Mr Modi's headache, and not the opposition's. Will he tinker with the constitution as some fear." it writes. It also asks whether, despite the talk of "inclusive government", if Muslims and Christians will be targeted during PM Modi's second term. However, *Dawn* still seems to see some hope of a Congress party revival: "But the Congress though considerably mauled is still there after winning a clutch of state assemblies from the BIP recently. It also shores up a crucial but fragile alliance in Karnataka while running stable governments in key Hindi-belt states. On Thursday, the party swept the polls in communist-ruled Kerala. Some would say Mr Modi is primarily the preferred candidate of a powerful business lobby, which would nudge him towards balancing his ideological yearning for a Hindu nation with the more worldly need to create a conducive climate to improve India's flagging economic profile."

Bangladesh's *The Daily Star*, on the other hand, is far more congratulatory in its tone, remarking that PM Modi's policies have clearly worked with the people. Even while flagging certain issues that could be a thorn in bilateral ties, the editorial keeps to its upbeat tone: "Some of the electioneering issues—such as the topic of the National Register of Citizens of India, and the Modi government offering citizenship to Bangladeshi Hindus—did concern us. But under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, India and Bangladesh have already built upon their historically good relationship. And we hope that during his new term, Modi will continue to lead India down that path."

Muslims And LIBERALISM

POLITICAL SCIENTIST Shafigur Rahman uses the BJP's landslide victory in India to talk about the wave of populism that has swept liberal democracies in general in *The Daily* Star. Rahman talks of how the "othering of Muslims" and the role it has played in

strengthening conservative narratives: "It's hard to deny any causative role of Islam. The emergence of right-wing, national identity politics was perhaps inevitable in India, but BJP's astonishing dominance must be partially attributable to Pakistan's persistent spoiling and nightmare-neighbour role? Right-wing majoritarians everywhere are scapegoating Muslims as the principal other; morality of their methods can be questioned, but the success cannot."

Rahman's argument, though, makes a somewhat unique argument. In essence, he states that Muslims, rather than being a complete anathema to a liberal democratic politics, have enhanced it: "I would argue that Islam has not undermined the liberal order by sowing doubts within liberal ranks or exposing its contradiction, it has weakened liberalism by emboldening and consolidating the enemies of liberalism in established democracies which were scattered and disheartened after the bloodbath of WWII and subsequent emergence of liberal world order. Stubborn defense of group identity by Muslims of the world has made upholding group identity respectable for all groups, majority or minority, powerful or weak. In the age of mass politics, group identities like religion or nation have more elements in common than in difference. If Muslims can be unabashedly assertive about the sanctity of their religious identity and traditions, other groups can be unapologetic about their respective identities too."

VAJPAYEE'S EXAMPLE

ASHRAF JEHANGIR Qazi, a retired Pakistani diplomat, writes in *Dawn* on May 26, that Narendra Modi's election to a second term "is not a good omen for India and its neighbourhood, unless Modi demonstrates an ability to rise above himself and beyond the Hindutva vision of the RSS. Vajpayee displayed an inclination in this regard. But Modi is more limited. He may now be inclined to see himself as the embodiment and validation of Hindutva. Arguably, this might provide him the space to reinterpret the Hindutva ideology, narrative and vision in a more inclusive and rational politics. As of now, this appears less likely than ever." Qazi minces no words and issues a warning that, "Hindutva as a fascist, communal, irrational and vengeful ideology can never provide India a basis on which to emerge as a credible great power in the 21st century. As a lunatic fringe movement it was a phenomenon common to all political societies. But as a lunatic mainstream ideology it will degrade India's future and threaten regional and possibly global stability."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A NEW ERA THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A re-

markable victory, A great responsibility' (IE, May 24). The BJP government under Narendra Modi, has won the Lok Sabha elections. The credit should also go the voters who rooted for Modi. This is a victory of nationalism.

Yugal Koshore Sharma, Faridabad

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A remarkable victory, a great responsibility' (IE, May 24). The election results cement the position of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as country's most formidable politician in decades. The BJP had been expected to emerge as the single largest party but it has far exceeded the majority mark. It appears now that Indian politics has entered a new era.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

DEMOCRACY'S CALL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Agenda No 1' (IE, May 24). The economic challenges are important but it important is to restore the credibility of institutions. The credibility of the CBI, Election commission and judiciary is at stake. Suchak D Patel. Ahmedabad

WHY BLAME EVM

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Shooting the machine' (IE, May 23). EVMs have

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com

or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should

mention their postal address and phone number. THE WINNER RECEIVES **SELECT EXPRESS**

PUBLICATIONS

been used in all general and state assembly elections since 2004. It has become customary for the political parties to allege tampering of EVMs when they lose elections but they are quite

comfortable with the machines when

they win. Even the BJP did so after its

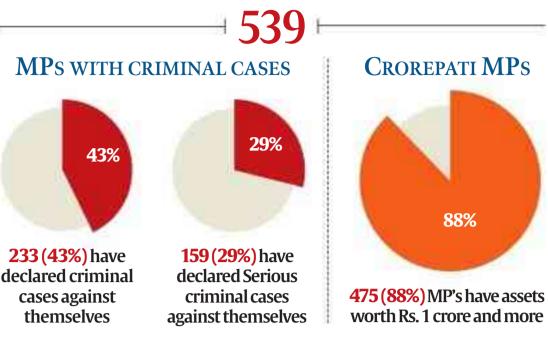
defeat in 2009 Lok Sabha election. M C Joshi, Lucknow

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@expressindia.com

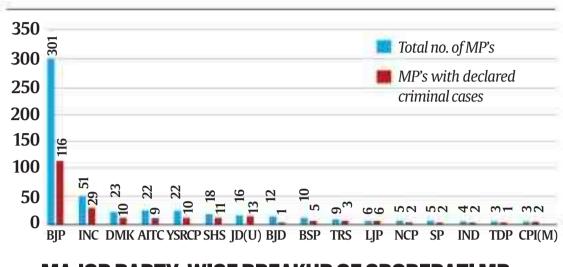
TELLING NUMBERS

43% of new MPs declared cases against selves, 11 of murder

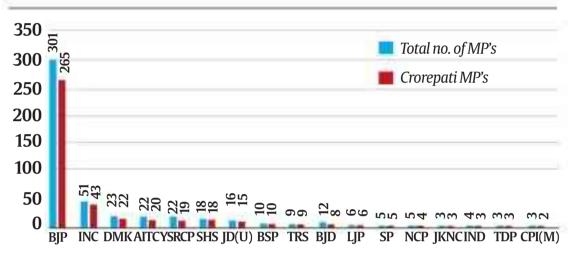
TOTAL MPS ANALYSED



MAJOR PARTY-WISE BREAKUP OF **DECLARED CRIMINAL CASES**



MAJOR PARTY-WISE BREAKUP OF CROREPATI MPs



AMONG THE newly elected Lok Sabha MPs, 43% have declared criminal cases against themselves, according to an analysis by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and New Election Watch, which looked at the affidavits of 539 of the 542 MPs (the affidavits of three MPs were not clear, the two organisations said in a statement). Of the 539 winners analysed, 233 (43%) were found to have declared criminal cases. In 2014, out of 542 newly elected MPs analysed, 185 (34%, or one-third) had declared criminal cases against themselves. In 2019, out of all 543 winners, 162 (30%) had declared criminal cases. Since 2009, the increase in the number of MPs with declared criminal cases is 44%.

Of the 539 MPs in 2019, the statement said, 159 (29%) have declared serious criminal cases relating to rape, murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, crimes against women etc. This increases from 112 of 542 (21%) in 2014 and 76 of 543 (14%) in 2009. In other words, the count has more than doubled since 2009.

One Congress winner, Dean Kuriakose from Idukki constituency, has declared 204 criminal cases against himself, including cases related to committing culpable homicide, house trespass, robbery, criminal intimidation etc.

Eleven of the MPs have declared that they face cases under IPC section 302 (murder), the statement said. These are: Horen Sing Bey (BJP, Autonomous District, Assam); Nisith Pramanik (BJP, Cooch Behar, West Bengal); Ajay Kumar (BJP, Kheri, UP); Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur (BJP, Bhopal, MP); Chhatar Singh Darbar (BJP, Dhar, MP); Atul Kumar Singh (BSP, Ghosi, UP); Afzal Ansari (BSP), Ghazipur, UP); Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury (Congress, Baharampur, West Bengal); Naba Kumar Sarania (Independent, Kokrajhar, Assam); Bhonsle Shrimant Chhatrapati Udayanraje Pratapasinh Maharaj (NCP, Satara, Maharashtra); and Kuruva Gorantla Madhav (YRCP, Hindpur, Andhra Pradesh).

An analysis of wealth found that the BJP, with the highest number of MPs, also has the highest number of crorepatis (116 of 301 analysed) but the Congress has a much higher share of crorepatis (43 out of 51).

Source for data and graphs: ADR and New Election Watch

EXPERTS EXPLAIN

Why so many MPs are dynasts

A record 30% of the new Lok Sabha MPs belong to political families. Among states, Punjab and Bihar have the highest proportions of dynastic MPs. Among parties, Congress remains the most dynastic but BJP is catching up, while CPM is the least dynastic. Two political scientists examine the trends and reasons

%

Dynasts

100%

36%

50%

21%

No.

MPs

25

2

14

Dynasts

3

PARLIAMENTARY FAMILIES Dynasts among candidates Dynasts among MPs (389 of 2,189)(162 of 542) THE DYNAST MPs

State

Assam

15%

22%

9%

15%

22%

18%

0%

5%

Andaman & Nicobar

Arunachal Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh

	PARTIES FIE DYNASTS	LC
2	7 %	

(227 dynasts among 856 candidates) **NATIONAL PARTIES**

18%

(162 dynasts among 1,333 candidates)							
STATE PARTIES							
STATEBYSTATE							
State	National parties	State-based parties					
Andhra	16%	28%					
Assam	25%	0%					
Bihar	58%	14%					
Chhattisgarh	27%	0%					
Delhi	29%	0%					
Gujarat	13%	0%					
Haryana	50%	5%					
Himachal	25%	0%					
J&K	27%	8%					
Jharkhand	25%	14%					
Karnataka	35%	13%					
Kerala	13%	8%					
MP	24%	2%					
Maharashtra	35%	19%					
Meghalaya	25%	100%					

33%

44%

33%

36%

32%

28%

30%

10%

WOMEN CANDIDATES ARE MORE DYNASTIC

0 of 10 (0.00%)

Odisha

Punjab

Rajasthan

Telangana

Tamil Nadu

Uttar Pradesh

Uttarakhand

West Bengal

Woman dynasts

CPI(M)

Bihar	17	40	43%
Chandigarh	0	1	0%
Chhattisgarh	2	11	18%
Dadra Nagar & Haveli	0	1	0%
Daman & Diu	0	1	0%
Delhi	2	7	29%
Goa	0	2	0%
Gujarat	4	26	15%
Haryana	3	10	30%
Himachal Pradesh	1	4	25%
J <mark>a</mark> mmu & Kashmir	1	6	17%
Jharkhand	4	14	29%
Karnataka	11	28	39%
Kerala	3	20	15%
Lakshadweep	0	1	0%
Madhya Pradesh	6	29	21%
Maharashtra	20	48	42%
Manipur	0	2	0%
Meghalaya	1	2	50%
Mizoram	0	1	0%
Nagaland	0	1	0%
Odisha	7	21	33%
Puducherry	0	1	0%
Punjab	8	13	62%
Rajasthan	8	25	32%
Sikkim	0	1	0%
Tamil Nadu	14	38	37%
Telangana	6	17	35%
Tripura	0	2	0%
Uttar Pradesh	22	80	28%
Uttarahkand	1	5	20%
West Bengal	7	42	17%
Total	162	542	30%

41.8% (102 of 244 candidates)

3 of 69 (4.35%)

Men dynasts		14.70 % (2	14.70% (287 of 1947 candidates)	
PARTY BY	PARTY			
Party	Women dynast candidates	Men dynast candidates	Total dynast candidates	
BJP	29 of 55 (52.73%)	67 of 381 (17.59%)	96 of 436 (22.02%)	
Cong	28 of 52 (53.85%)	103 of 368 (27.99%)	131 of 420 (31.19%)	
AITC	6 of 22 (27.27%)	4 of 40 (10.00%)	10 of 62 (16.13%)	
SP	6 of 6 (100.00%)	9 of 43 (20.93%)	15 of 49 (30.61%)	
BJD	4 of 7 (57.14%)	4 of 14 (28.57%)	8 of 21 (38.10%)	
BSP	3 of 23 (13.04%)	13 of 360 (3.61%)	16 of 383 (4.18%)	
RJD	3 of 3 (100.00%)	5 of 18 (27.78%)	8 of 21 (38.10%)	
YSRC	2 of 4 (50.00%)	5 of 21 (23.81%)	7 of 25 (28.00%)	
TDP	2 of 3 (66.67%)	11 of 22 (50.00%)	13 of 25 (52.00%)	
DMK	2 of 2 (100.00%)	8 of 21 (38.10%)	10 of 23 (43.48%)	
TRS	2 of 2 (100.00%)	4 of 15 (26.67%)	6 of 17 (35.29%)	
Sena	1 of 10 (10.00%)	7 of 88 (7.95%)	8 of 98 (8.16%)	
JD(U)	1 of 2 (50.00%)	3 of 23 (13.04%)	4 of 25 (16.00%)	
SAD	1 of 2 (50.00%)	5 of 8 (62.50%)	6 of 10 (60.00%)	
NCP	1 of 1 (100.00%)	10 of 33 (30.30%)	11 of 34 (32.35%)	
ADMK	1 of 1 (100.00%)	4 of 20 (20.00%)	5 of 21 (23.81%)	
CPI	0 of 4 (0.00%)	2 of 45 (4.44%)	2 of 49 (4.08%)	



CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT & GILLES VERNIERS

WHILE PROMINENT dynasts of the Congress party and other regional parties have bitten the dust — including of course Rahul Gandhi himself in his fiefdom of Amethi — the dynastic factor has not been absent in this election at all. If anything, the phenomenon has increased.

We define 'dynast' any candidate or MP having a relative who in the past or in the present has served or serves an elective mandate, at any level of representation. It also includes candidates with relatives who serve or have served prominent positions in party organisations.

In 2016, a book edited by Kanchan Chandra showed that a "quarter of Indian parliamentarians were dynastic, on average, between 2004 and 2014..."

(Democratic dynasties, p. 49). Even higher figures emerge from the data collected by a team of researchers of the Trivedi Centre for Political Data (Ashoka University) and CERI (Sciences Po) in the framework of the CNRSsponsored SPINPER project about the Social Profile of Indian National and Provincial Elected Representatives. The data suggest that in 2019, 30% of

all Lok Sabha MPs belong to political families, a record percentage.

Among the large states, those where the proportion of dynasts stands above the na-

Rahul Gandhi lost Amethi

but dynastic trend goes on

elsewhere. Tashi Tobgval

tional average are, in the increasing direction, Rajasthan (32%), Orissa (33%), Telangana (35%), Andhra Pradesh (36%), Tamil Nadu (37%), Karnataka (39%), Maharashtra (42%), Bihar (43%) and Punjab (62%). Clearly, the phenomenon is all pervasive geographically. More surprisingly, it affects all parties too

— and not necessarily the usual suspects. One would assume that state-based parties, which tend to function as private familyholdings, would be more dynastic. That is not actually the case. National parties are at the forefront of the phenomenon, across all states. The gap is particularly striking in Bihar (58% of dynasts among the candidates of the national parties against 14% among those of the state parties), in Haryana (50% against 5%), in Karnataka (35% against 13%), in Maharashtra (35% against 19%), in Odisha (33% against 15%), in Telangana (32% against 22%) and even in Uttar Pradesh (28% against 18%). Some state parties however stand above the average proportion of dynastic candidates: ID(S) (66%), SAD (60%), TDP (52%), RJD (38%), BJD (38%), SP (30%). Most of these parties are led by political families, often large ones, as the case of the SP.

The only parties which do not indulge in dynasticism are the CPI and the CPI(M), where less than 5% of the candidates belonged to a political families. They are today at rock bottom (for reason others than lack of dynasticism, admittedly).

Among the national parties, Congress re-

mains the most dynastic one, with 31% of his candidates belonging to a political family. But the BJP is catching up with 22% of dynast candidates. This last figure is counter-intuitive for two reasons. First, the BJP relentlessly criticises all opponents for being dynastic enterprises, accusing them of forming an antidemocratic establishment. Second, the BJP has made a special effort to renew his candidates by denying ticket to about one hundred of its 282 outgoing MPs. But in spite of this massive change of guard, the percentage of dynasts among the BJP candidates has reached an unprecedented level. Why?

The main reason quite simply is that parties try to maximise their chances at winning seats by fielding candidates that tick most of the winnability boxes. The fact remains that locally, being a dynast remains by and large more an asset than a liability.

Second, women candidates are more "dynastic" than male candidates. Parties tend to select their women candidates from within existing political families, as they still perceive that fielding women candidates constitutes a risk. As a result, 100% of the female candidates fielded by the SP, the TDP, the DMK and the TRS belong to political families. In smaller parties, they also tend to be directly related to the party leader. For the RID

the three women candidates fielded are wives of jailed party goondas.

This trend applies to Congress and BJP as well with respectively 54% and 53% of their women candidates being dynasts. Even the Trinamool Congress, which has given tickets to a record number of women and which is one of the less dynastic parties of India. tends to play it safe by nominating a large fraction of women belonging to political families (27%).

However, one of the main reasons why dynasts are nominated by parties in large proportion pertains to their influence within the parties themselves and by the fact that they tend to perform better than non-dynastic candidates. While 22% of the BJP candidates were dynasts, the share of these dynasts among the BJP MPs jumps to 25%. The gap is even larger on the Congress side (from 31% to 44%) and among key state parties, including the Shiv Sena where dynasts represented only 8% of the party candidates, but 39% of the party MPs! Across parties, the over-representation of dynasts is stronger among the elected MPs than among the candidates. The question then is why are voters more attracted by dynasts, even when they sometimes claim that they want some political change?

It may be that the delegitimisation of dynasticism worked at the general level, as part of a national political narrative. But it does not mean that the factors cease to operate at the local level. The data suggests that the phenomenon has increased in this election, including within the winning party. Therefore, one should be cautious with statements that the vote for the BJP represented an indictment against democratic dynasticism.

CERI-Sciences Po/CNRS, Paris, professor of Indian Politics & Sociology at King's India Institute, London, and non-resident scholar at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Gilles Verniers is assistant professor of political science, Ashoka University.

Christophe Jaffrelot is senior research fellow at

In Assam numbers, how BJP gained from demography, CAB and seat selection

3 of 59 (5.08%)

KABIR FIRAQUE NEW DELHI, MAY 26

IN THE Lok Sabha election results from Assam, where the BJP has improved from seven seats out of 14 in 2014 to nine seats in 2019, two questions might strike anyone who had followed the events in the state leading up to the election. How did the BIP gain when it had faced so much anger over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) being pushed by its government at the Centre? Second, when the BJP's vote share in Assam has fallen fractionally from 36.86% in 2014 to 36.05% in 2019, how did that translate into two additional seats?

The first question should be addressed by demography. Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the CAB helped the BIP across the state by polarising voters. In areas where the Bill has enjoyed visible support, it does appear to have worked for the BJP. Even in areas where it has faced protests, the BIP made massive gains, but many factors are likely to have contributed to that.

The second question is answered by arithmetic. The BJP's 36.86% vote share of 2014 was spread thinner, coming from 13 of the 14

seats, while the 36.05% this year comes from just the 10 seats that the BJP contested. If these state-wide vote shares are recalculated only for the seats actually contested, then the BJP polled 40.15% in 13 seats in 2014, and has improved hugely to 54.31% in 10 seats now.

The four seats that the BIP did not contest, in fact, were seen as its weak links. Its allies, AGP and Bodoland People's Front, lost all four. If their vote shares are counted, the NDA share adds up to 46.76% in 14 seats.

Gains and losses

Of Assam's two major geographical regions, the Barak Valley with two seats is predominantly Bengali, both Hindu and Muslim. The Brahmaputra Valley with 11 seats, which subdivides into Upper and Lower Assam, has a mixed demography that changes with geography, with the lowermost two seats, Dhubri and Barpeta, marked by a predominantly Muslim population, mostly of Bengali origin. In between the two regions is the 14th seat, a hill constituency formally called Autonomous District but popularly known as Diphu.

The BJP's seven seats in 2014 had all been from among the 11 in the Brahmaputra Valley. This time, it has retained six of those and

2019 2014 **BJP** votes 55.07 lakh 64.85 lakh 13 Seats contested 10 BJP vote share overall 36.86% 36.05% Share in seats contested 40.15% 54.31% BIP allies' votes 19.28 lakh 10.71% Allies' vote share overall NDA vote share 36.86% 46.76%

THE GROWTH STORY

ceded one to the Congress (Nagaon), which it has compensated for by snatching Diphu from the Congress. What it has gained is the two seats of the Barak Valley, formerly held by the AIUDF and the Congress respectively.

Barak Valley

Opposition to the CAB has come primarily from within the Assamese-speaking community in the Brahmaputra Valley, across religious lines. It is in the Barak Valley that the CAB enjoys support, though it needs to be qualified. Bengali Hindus have largely welcomed the Bill, which seeks to ease Indian citizenship norms for Hindu migrants from Bangladesh (among other communities and nationalities), while Bengali Muslims in Barak Valley have opposed it.

Silchar in Barak Valley, which is predominantly Bengali Hindu, voted out sitting Congress MP Sushmita Dev. "The BJP has been determined to pass the Bill once it gets a majority in Rajya Sabha. Refugees who have come from Bangladesh and are settled in Assam want citizenship and the Bill will help them," said BJP leader Kabindra

Purkayastha, who had lost to Sushmita from Silchar in 2014.

Both Sushmita and her current BJP rival gained votes, but the numbers suggest that Sushmita ceded a significant section of her Bengali Hindu votes. In 2014, the AIUDF, which addresses Bengali Muslim voters, had polled over 10% in Silchar. Though the AIUDF was absent this time, the Congress share grew only from 42% to 44%, while the

BJP share grew from 38% to over 52%. The other Barak Valley seat, Karimganj, has a large Bengali Muslim population and is reserved for SCs. In a contest that eventually took shape between the BIP (45%) and the AIUDF (41%), the Congress (11%) is being seen as having taken part of the Muslim vote away from the AIUDF.

Brahmaputra Valley

The BJP may have dropped one seat in the Brahmaputra Valley, but its gains elsewhere in the region have been massive. Himanta cited the examples of Tezpur, where the BJP had won by 86,000 votes in 2014 and improved the margin to 2.4 lakh in 2019, and Lakhimpur, where the margin improved to 3.50 lakh, bettering even present CM Sarbananda Sonowal's 2.9 lakh in 2014.