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## COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)



### Central Committee

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### **Review of Lok Sabha Election (Adopted by the Central Committee At its June 7-8, 2014 Meeting, New Delhi)**

The 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election has brought about a major change in the political situation. The sweeping victory of the BJP-led alliance represents a rightward shift with all its political consequences. For the first time a party based on the Hindutva ideology has won an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha.

#### **BJP's Sweeping Victory**

The BJP has won 282 seats on its own while the NDA has won 336 seats. This is the first time a party has won a majority on its own since 1984 elections. It is also the first time a non-Congress party has won a majority in the Lok Sabha since the Janata Party victory in 1977. The BJP got an absolute majority with a vote share rose of 31 per cent. Though this is an increase of 12.2 per cent compared to the 18.8 per cent it got in 2009, it is the lowest vote share on which a party has got a majority. The NDA has got 37.3 per cent. The sweep of the BJP has been the most intense where it is traditionally strong and where the Congress is the main opposing party. In Gujarat and Rajasthan, the BJP swept all the seats getting 26 and 25 respectively. In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP got 27 out of 29 seats and in Chattisgarh it got 9 out of 11. In Delhi it won in all the 7 seats.

The BJP's most striking success was its sweep in UP. The BJP won an unprecedented 71 out of the 80 seats with two more seats going to an allied party. The BJP garnered 42.3 per cent of the vote. In Bihar the BJP and its allies got 31 out of the 40 seats.

The trend in favour of Narendra Modi and the BJP was reflected in other parts of the country too. In Maharashtra, the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance won 42 out of the 48 seats. In Jharkhand, the Party won 12 out of the 14 seats. In Karnataka, the Party won 17 out of the 26 seats. Even in Assam, the BJP got 7 out of the 14 seats.

The BJP was able to acquire new allies in this election. The TDP in Andhra Pradesh-Telangana, the Lok Janshakti Party and the Rashtriya Lok Samata Party in Bihar, a group of regional parties in Tamilnadu – DMDK, PMK and MDMK and a number of smaller caste based or local parties in

UP, Maharashtra and the North-East. These allies helped broadening the appeal of Narendra Modi and the BJP.

### **Congress Rout**

There was an anti-Congress wave in this election. The Congress Party could get only 44 seats and the UPA got 60 seats. This is its worst performance ever. The lowest tally the Congress had got earlier was in the 1999 elections when it won 119 seats. The Congress poll percentage dropped to 19.3 per cent from the 28.6 per cent in 2009.

The UPA government's misrule, the chronic price rise, agrarian distress, unemployment and the massive corruption which became the hallmark of the UPA government created the grounds for the anti-Congress mood across the country.

### **BJP's Campaign**

The BJP could successfully cash in on the anti-Congress mood to register a big victory. It was able to effectively project Narendra Modi as its Prime Ministerial candidate. There was an unprecedented high powered national campaign which projected Narendra Modi as the leader who could deliver on development based on its record in Gujarat. However, under the veneer of this campaign for development and good governance, there was an intense communal campaign which was conducted by the RSS. The RSS deployed its full strength with its cadres conducting door to door campaign in the villages and towns. In UP and Bihar in particular this helped in creating the communal polarization and forging an upper caste consolidation behind the party. It also helped in rallying significant sections of the backward classes.

Narendra Modi himself interspersed his campaign with Hindutva symbolism and using issues from RSS agenda for his appeal. The strident campaign against Bangladesh infiltrators in West Bengal and Assam; the talk of "pink revolution" to target cow slaughter and the invocation of Lord Ram were all meant to rally the Hindutva forces and to enhance the communal appeal. The decision that Narendra Modi would contest from Varanasi in UP was also intended to exploit the Hindutva potential of this move which would help the BJP in UP and Bihar.

### **Big Business Support**

The fact that the entire big business and corporates were supporting Modi had a significant impact. It was most visible in the high decibel campaign for Modi in the corporate media. The massive advertising campaign costing thousands of crores of rupees in the television, print media and radio and use of billboards and hoardings was unprecedented. Television was a powerful medium with all Modi rallies being telecast live. Even in remote villages, television took the Modi message to the people. Social media was used effectively to reach out to the educated youth. Much of

the support for Modi was built up by this Presidential style campaign which was fully backed by the corporate media.

The pro Modi campaign had the greatest impact on the middle class and youth all over the country. It is these two vital sections which helped create a pro Modi trend in all other sections of society.

### **Non-Congress, Non-BJP Parties**

Among the non-Congress, non-BJP parties three did well in the election. The AIADMK in Tamilnadu which won 37 out of the 39 seats; the BJD in Odisha which won 20 out of the 21 seats, the TMC in West Bengal which won 34 out of the 42 seats. Apart from these three, the TRS in Telangana benefited from the formation of Telangana and won 11 out of the 17 seats.

The Samajwadi Party could get only 5 seats in UP compared to the 23 it had earlier. The BSP could not win any seat this time. The JD(U) could get only 2 seats in Bihar compared to 19 last time. The AGP drew a blank for the second successive time. The JD(S) could win only 2 seats, the same as last time. The YSRCP in Andhra Pradesh won 9 seats.

The Aam Aadmi Party contested 432 seats. It polled 2 per cent of the vote. It was able to win 4 seats in Punjab, getting 24.4 per cent of the vote. In Delhi, it could not win any seat but it got 33 per cent of the vote which is an increase of 4 percentage compared to its assembly election vote share in November last year. The AAP was able to get some votes in certain constituencies and areas which should have gone to the Left. They got more votes than CPI(M) candidates in the seats contested in Punjab, Haryana, UP, Uttarakhand, two out of the three seats in Rajasthan and the Shimla seat in Himachal Pradesh. The AAP was able to attract sections of the new voters and the middle class in certain areas.

### **Electoral Tactics**

The Central Committee formulated the electoral line based on the political-tactical line adopted at the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress. We had to fight the Congress and the BJP and strive to increase the representation of the CPI(M) and the Left. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress, we had concluded that a third alternative based on a common programme was not feasible. Instead, we should strive for united actions with non-Congress secular parties on issues and where required we can enter into electoral adjustments with them. We should work for building the Left and democratic alternative.

It is based on this political-tactical line that we adopted tactics for the Lok Sabha elections. The main slogans we had raised were: reject the Congress; defeat the BJP; strengthen the Left, for a secular-democratic alternative.

We also tried to focus on the rising danger of the BJP and the communal forces. A National Convention Against Communalism was organized in Delhi on October 30, 2013 in which 13 parties participated. Following that, conventions were held in some of the states, though it was confined to the Left parties.

In the course of the election campaign, it became evident that the BJP was gaining while the Congress was losing ground. However, though we had raised the pitch of our campaign against the BJP, it was not effective enough, given the limited reach of the Party in most of the states.

There was no scope for a non-Congress secular combination emerging at the national level before the election. Taking this into account we had sought to have electoral tie-ups with some of the regional parties in states like Tamilnadu, Odisha, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. But these too failed to materialize. What we could accomplish was to get 9 of the non-Congress secular parties (including the 4 Left parties) to declare their intent to come together to present a secular-democratic alternative after the election. Even this could not have any impact after the breakdown of the AIADMK-Left election alliance.

The absence of a credible non-Congress secular alternative at the national level benefited the BJP. It could project itself as the only alternative to the discredited Congress.

The elections were held at a time when international finance capital is seeking to push India towards a more aggressive neo-liberal trajectory. The Indian big bourgeoisie was also committed to the same path being pursued to get out of the crisis which was enveloping the economy. Both these external and internal forces were also interested in isolating and marginalizing the Left.

### **CPI (M) Performance**

The CPI(M) has won 9 seats – 5 in Kerala, two in Tripura and 2 in West Bengal. Two independents supported by the Party and the LDF have also won from Kerala. This is the lowest number of seats got by the CPI(M) in a Lok Sabha election.

The CPI(M) has got 3.2 per cent of the votes polled contesting a total number of 93 seats. If the votes of the five independents supported by the Party in Kerala is included then it may go up to 3.7 per cent. In 2009 election the Party had got 5.3 per cent. This is the lowest number of votes that the Party has polled.

As far as the Left parties are concerned, apart from the CPI(M), the CPI has won one seat from Kerala. By winning 12 seats and polling 4.5 per cent of the votes, this is the worst electoral performance of the Left.

## State-Wise Performance

**West Bengal:** The results have been disastrous for the CPI(M) and the Left Front. The CPI(M) won only two seats and none by the other Left Front partners. The TMC got 34 seats, the Congress 4 and the BJP 2. In terms of percentage of votes polled, the Left Front got 29.61 per cent (of which the CPI(M) got 22.71 per cent); the TMC got 39.36 per cent; the Congress 9.58 per cent and the BJP 16.84 per cent.

One of the main reasons for this shocking reverse was the large-scale rigging, capture of polling booths and resort to intimidation and terror. Out of the total 77,241 booths in the 19 districts, around 10,000 booths were affected by rigging or terror. Another 7,000 booths were partially affected. But this is not the sole reason for the defeat. The Party and the Left Front was not able to recover the erosion of support that they had suffered in many areas. This erosion had begun in the 2008 panchayat election and continued thereafter. Where the Party had retained its support and made some headway the targeted rigging ensured our defeat. In these areas we could not withstand the onslaught of the TMC on our cadres and supporters.

Despite this, thousands of our cadres and supporters braved attacks and conducted the election campaign and mobilized the people for polling. Ten comrades were killed during the campaign and in the post-poll violence. This includes two women.

The Election Commission totally failed in ensuring a free and fair poll and in preventing the subversion of the election machinery.

In terms of vote share, the TMC has been able to retain its position compared to the 2011 assembly election. But for the rigging and terror, the TMC would not have been in the position to win 34 seats and get this vote share. On the other hand, the Left Front would have fared better. Thus the outcome does not wholly reflect the popular opinion of the people.

The most disturbing feature is the gains made by the BJP which garnered nearly 17 per cent of the vote. They could win 2 seats, come second in 3 and poll over 2 lakh votes in around 20 seats.

The polemics and verbal clashes between Narendra Modi and Mamata Banerjee over the refugee issue (from erstwhile Pakistan and Bangladesh) helped them to garner votes. Sections of the Muslim minority rallied behind the TMC and there was some Hindu consolidation behind the BJP. The Party failed to estimate the situation regarding the BJP appeal and the campaign was mainly against the TMC. The threat posed by the BJP and the impact of the Modi campaign was not fully comprehended. The BJP was able to win over a section of the anti-TMC vote. Further some sections of the Left support base also voted for the BJP.

The major factors for the election reverses were political and organisational. The review of the state committee indicates some of them. One of these is the deficiency in developing sustained struggles and movements on the various issues affecting the people under TMC rule. The class and mass organisations have failed to independently develop broad based campaigns and struggles. The Party has to draw the correct lessons from this debacle and corrective measures have to be adopted. The Party will have to take the political and organisational steps necessary to build resistance against the attacks, protect the Party cadres and seriously take up the work of raising the people's issues and building movements and struggles of the basic classes.

## **Kerala**

In Kerala, the LDF won 8 out of the 20 seats and the UDF won 12 seats. CPI(M) won 5, CPI won 1 and the independents supported by the Party won 2 seats.

LDF votes increased from 67,17,438 (41.95%) in 2009 parliament elections to 72,10,581 (40.17%) in 2014 and the UDF votes declined from 76,53,189 (43.46%) votes in 2009 to 75,42,686 (42.02%) in 2014. There is an increase of 4,93,143 votes for LDF and 1,10,503 votes declined for the UDF.

Other than the four seats Party won in 2009, the Party expected to get six more seats. Out of these seats, the LDF could win only Kannur. In addition to Kannur seat, the LDF won Thrissur, Chalakudi and Idukki seats due to certain favourable local factors.

The Congress and its allies managed to retain the majority of seats. The anti-Congress wave which swept the country did not happen in Kerala. The minorities, both Muslim and Christian, who stood with the UDF remained with them in general. In three constituencies – Idukki, Chalakkudi and Thrissur – there is a shift among Christian minorities from UDF to LDF due to certain local factors. In Idukki, opposition to Kasturirangan Report is one of the factors that facilitated the shift. The candidate in Chalakudi helped to win that seat. In Thrissur, certain issues that existed between the Catholic church and UDF became favourable to LDF. The major caste organisations – SNDP and NSS – and other smaller caste organisations generally adopted a stand helping the UDF. Big money was used in this election by the UDF.

RSP defected from the LDF and became a constituent of the UDF at the time of elections. This adversely affected the LDF, though the rest of the LDF worked with cohesion.

BJP increased their votes from 10,31,274 (6.49%) in 2009 to 19,43,607 (10.83%) in 2014. In this election, AAP got 2,56,662 votes and votes for NOTA is 2,10,563.

There is a small erosion of Hindu votes from the Party and LDF to the BJP. BJP was able to attract a section of youth and middle class voters. The Party has to take steps to counter this trend.

The election result reveals that the LDF was not able to make any noticeable advance, despite the favourable political situation. Organisational weaknesses were evident in Kollam, Alappuzha and Kozhikode districts.

**Tripura:** The Party won both the seats with huge margins. The Tripura (East) seat was won by a margin of 4,84,358 and the Tripura (West) seat by 5,03,486 votes. The Left Front has polled 64.4 per cent of the votes cast. The two Left Front candidates led in all the 60 assembly segments. In 58 of them, they polled 50 per cent and above. The CPI(M) and the Left Front in Tripura and their cadres and supporters have to be congratulated for this brilliant victory.

In Tripura, the good work done by the Left Front government has been the major reason for the increase in popular support for the Party. Along with this, the Party has been constantly taking up the political and mass issues and successfully countering the propaganda of the Congress and other opposition parties.

**Andhra Pradesh:** In Telangana, the Party contested two Lok Sabha seats – Nalagonda and Bhongir where we polled 54,423 (4.6 per cent) and 54,040 (4.5 per cent) respectively. In the assembly elections we contested 31 seats and polled 1.55 per cent of the total votes. The Party won the Bhadrachalam (ST) seat polling 57,750 votes. The local adjustment with the YSR Congress helped us to win the seat. The next best performance was in Madhira, also in Khammam district where we polled 52,806 votes and came second. The CPI had an understanding with the Congress in Telangana.

In Andhra Pradesh we had contested two seats Aruku (ST) and Tirupati. We polled 38,897 votes (4.3 per cent) and 11,168 (0.9 per cent) respectively. In the assembly elections we contested in 31 seats. The Party could get only 0.4 per cent of the vote. There has been a substantial erosion in the traditional vote base of the party. According to the state committee review this is mainly due to the impact of money, caste and social pressures. There was no overall understanding with the CPI and they contested against our candidates in 13 assembly seats.

**Tamilnadu:** The CPI(M) and CPI contested the elections together. The Party contested in nine seats and the CPI in 8 and 1 in Puduchery. The highest vote polled was in Kanyakumari where the Party got 35,284 votes (3.6 per cent). This was followed by Coimbatore 34,197 (2.9 per cent) and Madurai 30,108 (3.1 per cent) and Chennai (North) 23,751 (2.6 per cent). The breakdown of the electoral tie up with the AIADMK at the start of the election campaign hampered our political campaign and left inadequate time for electoral preparations. This is the first time that the

CPI(M) and the CPI independently fought the elections. This enthused the cadres and supporters of both the parties. However, the Party has got much less votes than was expected.

The last time our Party contested independently without having an alliance with either the AIADMK or the DMK was in 1998. We had contested in two seats – Madurai and North Chennai where we polled 1,10,000 and 50,000 votes respectively. In both these seats our votes have come down substantially this time. This indicates that there is an erosion in the independent strength of the Party. It is to be examined whether continuous electoral alliances with the DMK, or, the AIADMK, in the past four decades have adversely affected the independent growth and political influence of the Party.

**Maharashtra:** The Party contested 4 seats. It got 76,890 in Palghar (ST) and 72,599 in Dindori (ST). In the other two seats, in Nasik we polled 17,154 and Hingoli 14,986 votes. In both the ST seats where we have our base, we have polled better votes though there is a fall in the vote share in these seats compared to 2009.

**Assam:** The Party contested three seats. In Barpeta, we got 27,539 (2.3 per cent) votes, in Tezpur 24,905 (2.5 per cent) votes and in Silchar 12,458 (1.6 per cent) votes. Overall, there is a decline in the vote share as these were the seats we contested last time too.

**Odisha:** The Party fought one Lok Sabha seat and 12 assembly constituencies. In the Bramhapur Lok Sabha seat the Party candidate polled 35,968 votes ( 4 per cent). The Party won one assembly seat Bonai (ST) polling 39,125 votes. Overall, the Party polled 0.44 per cent of the vote.

**Bihar:** The Party contested four seats. In Ujiarpur, we polled 53,044 (6.2 per cent) votes which is a decrease in the vote share compared to last time. The votes we got in the other seats are: Darbhanga 11,606 (1.4 per cent); Paschim Champaran 17,157 (2 per cent); and Khagaria 24,490 (2.7 per cent).

**Punjab:** The Party fought three seats and the performance has been poor. Overall we got 17,833 votes in the three seats which is 0.13 per cent of the total votes polled. In Anandapur Sahib we polled 10,483 votes which is less than what was polled in 2009.

### **Decline in Independent Strength**

These results, coming after the 2009 reverse is a clear indication of the decline in the independent strength of the Party and its overall political influence. Given the limited strength of the Party and the fact that there was no electoral alliance with any of the regional parties, we did not expect to win a seat in any of the states outside West Bengal, Kerala and



Tripura. However, the disturbing trend is that there is a decline in the vote share in the seats that we contested.

An analysis of the election results in the states other than Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura will illustrate this. If we compare the seats that we contested in 2009 and 2014 (outside the three strong states) in all these seats our vote share has come down. The only exception being the Rajmahal (ST) seat in Jharkhand.

There is a decline in the vote share across the country, the only exception being Tripura. If we analyse the electoral performance of the Party in the last three decades, there is a declining trend in our independent strength, except in the three strong states. With the setback in West Bengal in these elections, this has come to the fore.

### **Some Observations**

Some other general observations can be made on the basis of a preliminary analysis of the voting trends and the reviews conducted so far by the state committees.

The Party has been unable to attract the new generation of voters by and large. This indicates that among the youth especially in the 18-25 age group, the appeal of the Party and its politics is minimal. How to orient the work of the Party among the youth and the strengthening of the mass organisations of youth needs to be taken up.

The other sections where the Party's appeal and support has weakened or is marginal is among the middle class. The urban voting pattern for the Party clearly indicates this. How to organize work among the middle class is a relevant issue.

In the voting pattern, the performance of the Party is relatively better in the tribal seats outside the three strong states. We have been able to retain our voting strength relatively more in tribal areas. The two assembly seats won in Telangana and Odisha are ST reserved seats. We should pay more attention to the organisational work in tribal areas.

The voting trends for the Party among the working class, the poor peasantry and agricultural workers are not available from the state reviews conducted so far. Here again, it may be stated in a general way that there is no advance. In many places we have retained our core support among these classes but there is a decline in some areas too.

### **Need for Electoral Reforms**

This election saw an exponential increase in the use of money power. Massive amounts were spent on advertising in television, newspapers and radio by the BJP. The use of private airplanes and helicopters by the various parties and all the expenses incurred for this are legitimate

according to the existing election laws. Apart from that there was the distribution of money to the voters on a large scale, particularly in Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and some other places. There is the need to curb both forms of election expenses – legal and illegal. Election reforms have to be undertaken including State funding in kind. This has to be pursued vigorously. We should campaign for a basic change in the electoral system by introducing proportional representation with a partial list system. Without these reforms, the parliamentary democratic system is going to be vitiated and distorted by big money power. More and more political parties and candidates will be beholden to the big capitalists and their class interests.

## **Conclusion**

The inescapable conclusion is that there is a decline in the mass base of the Party. The Party has been unable to advance and this is reflected in the poor election results. It reflects the failure of the Party to expand its political influence, increase its organisational strength and to develop its mass base, especially among the basic classes. The responsibility for this failure lies primarily with the Polit Bureau and the Central leadership.

- (i) In successive Party Congresses we have been emphasizing the need for enhancing the independent strength of the Party. Some of the states have attributed the erosion of our independent strength to the tactics of allying with the bourgeois parties. The failure to advance the independent strength of the Party necessitates a re-examination of the political-tactical line that we have been pursuing.
- (ii) There is weakness in translating the mass struggles and movements that we have led into the Party's political influence. There is also the failure to initiate struggles and develop the movements. They require a fresh look at the functioning of the Party's organization and the orientation of the work among the people.
- (iii) The reviews conducted by the state committees show that substantial sections of the membership of the mass organisations have not voted for the Party or Left candidates. The orientation of the mass organisations and the activities of the mass organisations have to be examined to ensure their independent functioning and that the political work and Party building is taken up.
- (iv) During the two and a half decades since liberalization changes have occurred in socio-economic conditions. There has been differentiation within classes under the impact of the neo-liberal regime. They have yet to be adequately grasped. These need to be studied and analysed. It is on this basis that we can evolve concrete slogans and bring changes in our approach both at the Party level and the class and mass organisations. At present, some of the slogans and demands that we raise are not relevant or, do not meet the aspirations

of different sections of the people or the various classes whom we wish to mobilize. This is of vital importance for the future direction of the Party's activities and for developing movements and mass struggles.

Given the gravity of the situation, the Central Committee should implement the above four steps so that corrective measures and fresh initiatives are taken in all these areas.

### **New Situation**

The direction of the BJP-led government headed by Narendra Modi is emerging. It will aggressively pursue neo-liberal policies and a big business driven model of development. As in the time of the earlier NDA government, the infiltration of the RSS into the institutions of the State and the communalization of the educational system and social and cultural institutions will be initiated. There will be an emphasis on a national security state which will increasingly infringe on the democratic rights of the people. The model of development that Narendra Modi seeks to build will mean the curtailment of the welfare measures and the livelihood needs of the vast mass of the working people and the poor.

The CPI(M) and the Left will have to firmly oppose the fresh offensive of the neo-liberal policies. It should devote its full energies to develop the mass movements and struggles of the various sections of the working people. It should be able to be in the forefront of the battle against the communal forces and the efforts at infiltrating the communal ideology by rallying all other democratic and secular forces.

The BJP has won a victory not on the basis of the Hindutva agenda and the communal appeal alone. The people have supported the BJP expecting that they will deliver on development, jobs and bring a change in governance. The BJP-led government's rightwing economic policies and efforts to advance the Hindutva agenda will come into conflict with the people's aspirations and needs. The Party should be able to take up the challenge of fighting for the people's interests and develop the movements and struggles of the working people. The Party will be in the forefront of the struggle to defend secularism, the rights of the minorities and carry forward the struggle for social justice. Overcoming the weaknesses and shortcomings in the political and organisational work of the Party in the days ahead, the Party will work with renewed vigour to advance the Left and democratic forces.

### **Immediate Tasks**

- (i) Given the alienation of the Party from the people, we should go amongst the people, step up our mass activities, forge links with the people and initiate struggles on local issues.
- (ii) The new activists and supporters thrown up during the campaign should be drawn into the mass organisations. The

- Party committees should take steps to recruit the more advanced activists into the Party.
- (iii) With the new BJP government in office, as the fresh economic policies and neo-liberal measures are formulated, the Party should be able to take up those policy measures and their impact on the people for campaigns and for developing struggles.
  - (iv) We should organize solidarity campaigns and rally democratic opinion against the attack on democracy in West Bengal and the violence against the CPI(M) and the Left there.
  - (v) The Party should be vigilant to promptly come out against any efforts to advance the communal agenda and to counter the activities of the communal forces. We should work for mobilizing the wider secular and democratic forces for this anti-communal task.
  - (vi) We should make efforts to strengthen Left unity and coordination between the Left-led mass organisations for campaigns and movements. We should build bridges with Left intellectuals and progressive personalities.
  - (vii) Steps to revamp the organisation and initiate rectification measures should be undertaken at all levels of the Party.
  - (viii) The state committees should discuss the work of the mass organisations in the light of the election results. They should take steps to ensure the independent functioning and enhancing their activity in taking up mass issues.
  - (ix) Change stereotyped forms of campaign and use new forms of communication and methods to appeal to the people. The social media teams which worked during the elections should be given a permanent set up and their work coordinated.
  - (x) The Central Committee review of the elections and the immediate steps to be taken are to be reported extensively in the Party. For this, apart from committee meetings, general body meetings should be organized.