

Analysis of results of five assembly elections



Results of the assembly elections in four states and one Union Territory (UT) were declared on 4 May last. Of these five, the results in Assam, Kerala and Puducherry were largely predictable. But the verdicts in West Bengal, where the BJP recorded a landslide victory against the three-term TMC government, and the emergence of Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), a new force led by filmstar Chandrasekaran Joseph Vijay, in Tamil Nadu have surprised many. The poll outcome in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu have been a blow to the established regional parties and signalled further consolidation of a single party rule in both the Centre and the states. With Assam, Tripura, Bihar, Odisha and now West Bengal under command, the BJP, apart from the Hindi heartland, has firmed up its grip over the eastern India as well. It warrants mentioning that free and fair election in all imperialist-capitalist countries today is nothing but a myth today and an outright deception to the people.

Elections are not fought on people's issues but money-media-administrative powers

One more feature glaringly manifested in these elections is that no party, whether national or regional, contested by highlighting the burning issues of people's life like phenomenal price rise, spurt in retail tariff of petrol-diesel-LPG, growing unemployment, closure of one after another industries throwing lakhs out of job, spike in the prices of agricultural inputs and non-availability of remunerative prices of crops to the pauperizing peasants, unabated increase of crimes against women, crumbling healthcare system, virtual abolition of government education system, more and more curtailment of the hard-earned rights of the workers, permeation of corruption in every sphere of administration and governance and so forth. Instead, what dominated the electoral scenario was fomenting communal-casteist-ethnic-chauvinist divides to maximum extent, hurling invectives often in filthiest of languages by the contesting parties against each other and vituperative utterances, and how widely money-media-mafia-administrative powers could be harnessed to ride to power. Money does not merely influence electoral politics anymore; it increasingly shapes who can enter it, survive within it and return victorious from it. Elections are no more fought based on ideology and democratic approach. Instead, communal polarization, hate campaigns, lure of freebies, distribution of doles rule the roost.

Beneath these visible aspects, lie another contest, one that is measured through assets, access and financial endurance. Parliamentary Democracy during the days of its advent formally promised equal political participation. It stipulated that an individual should be able to enter politics through ideas, organizational ability or public trust. But in present decadent moribund capitalist order, electoral competition increasingly demands enormous financial resources. Campaign management, media visibility, social media outreach, party mobilization, constituency travel and election staffing— all require huge money. The candidate who lacks resources enters the field already disadvantaged. When access to electoral politics becomes expensive, leadership gradually shifts away from those rooted in local social histories towards those with financial networks and economic capital. Representation becomes

thinner because the representatives no longer emerge organically from the community's everyday struggles. Instead, politics starts rewarding those capable of sustaining the escalating costs of competition. Reminded of an observation of Shakespeare in 'Timon of Athens', a dark, experimental tragedy co-authored by him with Thomas Middleton: "*Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold ...wealth can "make black white, foul fair, wrong right"*". Naturally, when electoral politics consistently favours wealthier entrants, the democratic field narrows over time.

Apart from money and mafia powers, the bourgeois media also play a crucial role by, speaking candidly, brainwashing the electorates to either vote in favour of one chosen party or keep their choice limited between two contesting parties or alliances, both fielded by the ruling monopoly houses. And then the ruling parties make an all-out attempt to use administrative machinery to clinch electoral victory.

So, grassroots activism alone rarely decides electoral viability anymore, even in a state that has a glorious tradition of class and mass struggles against injustice and oppression. Candidates now require extensive financial backing, personal wealth or access to funding networks. This has altered the social composition of political leadership in bourgeois vote politics. Needless to say, this is not a surprise but inevitable in the rotten capitalist system which has destroyed the very vitals of bourgeois parliamentary democracy and now only maintains a facade of it to befool common people. In India particularly, people have not been able to vote enthusiastically since the ruling class, and its servitor parties have been manipulating vote in the like manner.

Of late, the BJP has made election more farcical by turning the Election Commission of India (ECI) into an appendage to it by modifying selection process of the election commissioners. Hitherto a panel comprising the Prime Minister, Chief Justice of India and the leader of the opposition used to appoint the election commissioners. Now the Chief Justice has been replaced by a cabinet minister through a new enactment in 2023 which means by majority vote, the ruling party can appoint its own pick-ups to the coveted posts. Even questions have been raised about the security features of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). In most countries, paper ballot is used in election. Ahead of the last assembly elections, the BJP government had rolled out, what it called, Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list with clear objective of deleting names of lakhs of eligible voters presumed to be opposed to it.

In this backdrop, let us proceed to analyze in brief the poll verdicts of four states and one UT.

Assam

Another tenure of the BJP was very much on the cards in Assam strewn with extreme communal-chauvinist rancour aided and abated by the government as well as the ruling party. This was the first state election held after the redrawing of geographical boundaries of assembly constituencies there. The election mandate mirrors the delimitation exercise of 2023, which created 104 Hindu-majority seats and 22 Muslim-majority ones. In the process, the number of seats where Muslim voters who are being continuously demonized by the RSS-BJP-Sangh Parivar, could play a decisive role was reduced from 29 to 22.

Assam chief minister, Himant Biswa Sharma is considered to be ahead of many in not just spreading anti-Muslim hatred and inflammatory rhetorics targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims as 'Miyas' but persecuting, harassing, threatening and isolating Muslim community as anti-nationals, illegal infiltrators and what not. In February last, the BJP Assam unit posted an AI-generated video (later deleted) depicting chief minister Sarma aiming a gun at men wearing skullcaps. sparking national outrage. In a press conference, Biswa Sarma reiterated the BJP's commitment to carrying on with evictions against "Bangladeshi" encroachers. His campaign promise had been to "reclaim" five lakh bighas of land from "Bangladeshi encroachers" and roll out bulldozers against "Bangladeshis" occupying even one katha (267 square metres) of land. Biswa Sarma has repeatedly called for social and economic boycott of the Bengali-speaking (Muslims in the state. He framed these exclusionary calls as a "non-cooperation movement" and urged citizens to deny them land, transport, and jobs "*India has always been a Hindu Rashtra and will forever remain a Hindu Rashtra,*" he had said during the campaign, indicating that the saffron party would intensify its religious polarization drive in the coming days.

It warrants mentioning that the ruling Indian bourgeoisie committed to operationalize its heinous policy of dividing the toiling masses directed the communal-chauvinist forces allegiant to it to undertake a campaign that the huge influx from other states and foreign countries, and the Bengali-speaking community particularly the Muslims are responsible for all distress of the Assamese-speaking populace. In the absence of a powerful united democratic movement of the toiling people of Assam rising above all divides and sharing a common cause against ruling capitalism, the common enemy and root of all evils, as well as a conducive ideological campaign, the common Assamese-speaking people were swayed by the sectarian chauvinist slogans and the atmosphere was further surcharged with communal-parochial-chauvinist tensions. Tracing that route, Himant Biswa Sharma, raised anti-Muslim hatred to a further height, cunningly dropped the names of a sizeable number of *bona fide* Indian citizens professing Islam from the voters' list and thus exacerbated communal polarization to a zenith. Alongside, he announced several social welfare and financial assistance schemes like Orunodoi, Lakhpati Baideo, Nijut Moina and Nijut Babu etc. in the run-up to the recent elections, targeting women, students, and low-income families. These

schemes have gained visible traction among the voters who are assailed by deeper malaises like stagnant incomes, skyrocketing price line, widening rural-urban gaps, and a labour market increasingly defined by informal, low-quality work. The saffron sweep is, therefore, attributed to a sharp religious polarization and the lure of doles. On the other hand, finding no other force to fall back upon, the minority Muslim community in the main voted for the Congress.

But the inhabitants are not aware where the money of such freebies is coming from. Fact is it is coming from loans. Assam's outstanding debt is estimated to be over Rs 2.06 lakh crore. The State's budget draws around 60-65 per cent of revenue from Central transfers—through Finance Commission devolution and Centrally Sponsored Schemes—about 12-15 per cent from public debt, and the remainder from its own revenue sources. So, the doles are distributed by drawing into public exchequer which comprises a huge number of external borrowings.

It is recalled that PM Modi in July 2022 had once ridiculed this practice of promising freebies or handouts as 'revadi' (a popular North Indian sweet) culture and warned that this practice is dangerous for India's long-term economic development and fiscal health. But now the same PM Modi and his party colleagues are seeking to arrogate to themselves the exclusive advantage of making pre-poll announcements about the launch of new schemes and projects or distributing some relief in the form of token transfers of so-called monetary benefits. So, such mandates though technically held out as people's choice is a shrewdly manipulated one based on non-issues, concocted stuffs, limitless deceptions, propagation of abject falsehoods. In the days to come, suffering people of Assam would realize from life's experience how have they been duped by the forces of reaction.

In fact, there have been a few powerful mass movements in Assam at the instance of our Party. In Nalbari, the BJP -led state government was out to permanently shut down the 235 bed Saheed Mukund Kakati Osamarik (civil) Chikitsalaya, The Assam government pleaded that a new hospital was being established 18 kilometers away. Against this highhandedness of the government, "Shaheed Mukund Kakati Osamarik Chikitsalay Suraksha Samity" was set up at the initiative of our Party and a sustained movement launched for long eight months. Under pressure of movement, the government was compelled to sustain the civil hospital and conceded that the existing hospital would have 110 beds. The Samity is still fighting for 235 beds.

Similarly, a massive movement has been organized against renaming of Karimganj district as Sribhumi. While the CPI (M), CPI are not been seen in the vortex of mass struggles, our comrades are active in that movement as well.

Tamil Nadu

This southern state has been in the grip of Dravidian politics for long. The Congress independently was last in power in Tamil Nadu till 1 March 1967. From then onwards, the state entered a long era of dominance by Dravidian parties like Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), formed on 17 September 1949 as a breakaway faction of the Dravida Kazhagam (DK) due to differences with the founder of DK, E.V. Ramasamy (Periyar) and C N Annadurai over the issue of participation in election politics. Side by side, Tamil Nadu has long been attuned to political theatrics, where cinema and power often blur into one continuum. From M G Ramachandran (MGR) to his successor J Jayalalithaa, film stars have entered politics and gone on to lead the state. Departed leader and former chief minister M Karunanidhi was also associated with the film world. In 1972, MGR broke out from DMK and formed AIADMK. From then onwards, the power in the state altered between the two with other national parties like the Congress or the BJP as well as pseudo-Marxists like the CPI (M), CPI have aligned with either this or that faction to stay afloat in the corridor of power.

But this time, another iconic South Indian matinee idol and former superstar Thalapathy (Commander) Vijay, born C. Joseph Vijay, who transitioned into vote politics after a wildly successful 33-year cinematic career, spined a surprise. His political party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) defied all naysayers to almost sweep the state election, marking a break in the established political order. There is little precedent for a fledgling political outfit, floated by someone who was an outsider to formal politics, to form the government in its very first election. It is reported that Vijay way back in 2009, converted his fan club into a welfare network that worked at the neighbourhood level, offering relief, education support and local assistance. By 2011, he was already testing its political reach by backing an AIADMK alliance, checking whether fandom could translate into votes.

This time, when the electoral battle was envisaged to be a usual saga between the DMK and a bit fragile AIADMK, Vijay surfaced as a third entrant who, many experts predicted, might capture at best 20 to 25 seats. Vijay has cast India's ruling BJP as his ideological adversary, and the incumbent DMK as his immediate political rival - a positioning that reflects Tamil Nadu's long resistance to the BJP's expansion, rooted in language politics (read imposition of Hindi) and a strong regional identity, as well as a promise of freshness. He offered a sense of fun, confidence and an aura of competence rooted in individuality which has been found to be giving him a different kind of power with support base among the young generation (age group 18-39) who constitutes roughly 42% of Tamil Nadu's electorates. So, when commentators and political observers were viewing return of DMK, Vijay upset all calculations. The ascent of Vijay as the 'Jana Nayakan', in the top spot, has blazed a trail like departed N.T. Rama Rao (NTR), who swept to power in undivided Andhra Pradesh within months of forming a political party.

But Vijay could not secure an absolute majority. He fell short of the magic figure of 118 seats in 234-member Tamil Nadu assembly by 10 seats. And then the usual turncoat politics in the ring of power surfaced. The Congress, who in alliance with the DMK, won 5 seats took no time in deserting its alliance partner and rally behind Vijay. The CPI (M) and CPI who also managed to bag two seats each with the backing of the DMK, followed the suit. And then Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), another regional party and Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), both alliance partners of DMK, shifted to Vijay. So, Vijay was set to form the government. And then a faction of roughly 30 rebel AIADMK MLAs spilt from the parent organization to support Vijay. This sealed smooth ascent of Vijay to the post chief minister. As a reward, Congress, VCK and IUML have got ministerial berths in Vijay's cabinet. It once again proved that power is the sole objective of these vote-oriented parties irrespective of hues. They have no principle, no accountability, no hesitation to floor, no qualms in quitting alliances. Only what matters is power. This election result and the political realignment thereafter with an eye on power ought to be an eyeopener for the electorates of the state.

Puducherry

Likewise, result of Puducherry was virtually a foregone conclusion. While Vijay's TVK pushed the two established Dravidian political parties in Tamil Nadu out of power after 59 years, there was no such development in Puducherry, the Tamil-speaking Union Territory, that is surrounded by Tamil Nadu on all sides but one. N. Rangasamy of the All India NR Congress (AINRC) has made it to the Chief Minister's chair twice in a row in his long career, guiding the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to a decisive victory by bagging 18 of the 30 seats despite its ally BJP's lackluster show of winning only 4 seats.

Kerala

Common refrain of the vote commentators is that power in Kerala alters between the CPI (M) and the Congress periodically. But is that enough to analyze the poll results of the state this time? After two consecutive terms in governance, the CPI (M)-led LDF has been decisively defeated by the Congress-led UDF. The CPI(M) acknowledged the result as a major blow, attributing the loss partly to anti-incumbency and the financial constraints imposed by the BJP-led Union Government, despite what they highlighted as 'commendable public welfare efforts'. But does that reflect objective reality? A deeper insight into the state of affairs says, NO. Cause of the CPI (M)'s defeat lies elsewhere.

It is true that Kerala has been a left-leaning state for long. But the question is did the undivided CPI or later its split faction the CPI (M) ever practised genuine leftism which calls for, among other things, intensifying class and mass struggles, based on higher proletarian ethics-culture-morality, as conducive to anti-capitalist socialist revolution and freeing people's mind from parliamentary illusion? History will not vouch for that.

Kerala bears a testimony to that. One would recall that the undivided CPI way back in 1957, formed a government in Kerala. But it stressed on only reforms and not encouraging people's movements. In fact, it opened fire on the striking workers at a cashew-processing factory in Chandanathope. The shooting resulted in casualties, severely damaging the government's pro-labour image and drawing protests from national trade union leaders. At that time, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, Founder of the SUCI (C), and an outstanding Marxist thinker of the era, had pointed out that the CPI (M) government was running the government just like a bourgeois party abandoning leftist line and so had not hesitated to suppress working class movement with bullets. The CPI (M) also did not fight casteism-communalism-religionism ideologically. Instead, it like the Congress then had practised casteist-religionist politics with the sole objective of reaping benefits in the polls. In fact, Indian Union Muslim League which allied with the Congress and the then existing Praja Socialist Party (PSP) in the late 1950s, shifted to and accepted by the CPI (M) as a coalition partner and fought jointly and won election in 1967. It was under this ministry that the infamous decision was taken to carve parts of Palakkad and Kozhikode districts to create a Muslim-majority Malappuram district.

Thereafter, the undivided CPI and thereafter the CPI (M) and its allies had seven terms in the government between 1980 and 2026. But everyone saw them running the government just like any other bourgeois government never skirting any effort to either encourage mass movements from the seat of governance or make people realize the futility of parliamentary democracy in dying capitalism. Rather, the CPI (M) leadership sought to give an impression that people's problems can be resolved in the parliamentary way—a view which counterposes basics of Marxism-Leninism. Since people of Kerala finds no difference between the Congress and the CPI (M), they voted them to power alternatively.

The factors which caused downfall of the CPI (M) in the last election reaffirm what has been stated in the aforesaid paragraph. By continuing to traverse a reformist line for long, the CPI (M) has drifted polls apart from leftism, abandoned the path of movement, and made parliamentary vote politics its bread and butter. Its attitude

towards people's movement has been just like the bourgeois rulers. For example, the ASHA workers with active involvement of and guided by our Party activists conducted a sustained movement for 266 days and nights in front of the Secretariat, enduring extreme hardships, in demand for a livable salary of at least Rs 15,000 per month, Rs 5,00,000 as a one-time pension benefit and dignified work conditions. But the CPI (M) government was unmoved. Rather it arrayed its entire coercive machinery to break the strike. Police used water cannons, confiscated the protesters' microphones, and took leaders and workers into custody. Early in the agitations, the state National Health Mission (NHM) director issued ultimatums to the striking workers, threatening them of dismissal if they did not immediately return to work. Top CPI(M) leaders publicly called the ASHA movement as politically motivated and orchestrated by "anarchist groups". They argued that the workers were volunteers—not entitled to state salaries—and accused the opposition of manipulating them. Finally, under pressure of movement, the salary was raised by only Rs 3000 per month and no other benefit was granted.

The CPI (M) -led government came forward with a controversial K-Rail project, which would have shattered the entire socio-economic-ecological structure of the state. To implement the central BJP government's fixed-term employment in India, the CPI (M) government, for the first time in the country, formed a company named K-Swift within the public sector undertaking, KSRTC. The government decided to formulate draft rules for labour codes which are thoroughly anti-worker. So, there was a powerful movement against it and our Party was a leading force in that movement. Then, without even the cabinet knowing, the government signed up for the PM SHRI scheme, which is part of the ruinous National Education Policy 2020. The CPI(M) government turned into the executors of PM Modi's declared objective of paving the way for large scale privatization. National highways managed and supervised by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), collect exorbitant tolls by operating the toll plazas through private concessionaires via electronic toll collection methods. The CPI (M) government hailed this as model of toll collection as evidence of development. During the inauguration of the Vizhinjam Port, the CPI (M) Minister of Ports conferred upon monopolist Gautam Adani, whose phenomenal growth in terms of wealth is attributed to his closeness to PM Modi, the status of the government's partner. The CPI (M) chief minister and his associates kept repeating that development would take place if there is increased capital investment by private operators. The ruling CPI(M) even joined hands with the BJP to crush the popular movement that arose against awarding Vizhinjam Port to Adani group. All these acted as factors for the workers to vote against the CPI(M). The approach of the CPI (M) government towards people's movements had fostered immense rage among the cadres of the CPI(M) as well.

Then is the case of corruption. Our Party has repeatedly been saying, anyone who opts for serving the worn out capitalist system cannot but plunge in corruption. Mismanagement, raging corruption, and loan-based development projects landed Kerala in a debt trap. In last 10 years, Kerala's public debt rose to Rs 6 lakh crores. Crores of rupees were siphoned off by creating new positions to accommodate leaders, beautifying and constructing ministerial bungalows, purchasing helicopters and buying luxury vehicles, employing personal staff of the ministers, conducting mega-events including 'Keraleeyam,'(annual festival) in a grandiose manner and splurging on foreign trips of ministers and officials. In a state where farmers commit suicide because they do not receive the price for the paddy produced through their hard work, the leaders felt no qualms in carrying out this extravagance.

To exploit religious sentiments in elections, beyond merely appeasing a particular religious group, the strategy tested and successfully implemented by the BJP for electoral victory involves fostering hatred and hostility against one religious community to consolidate vote from the other. In an attempt to copy this model verbatim, the propaganda carried out by integrating anti-Muslim sentiment and Islamophobia was a grand design formulated at the highest levels of the CPI(M) after the last parliamentary election. The chief minister himself is reported to have told the media that if the UDF would come to power, Marad (disease) would be repeated, and the Muslim League would govern the Home Department. Even when all Indian citizens living in Malappuram district (a Muslim majority district) were branded as extremists and anti-nationals and thereby sought to be isolated by the Hindutva group, the CPI (M) leaders remained silent. The most controversial aspect of this strategy was CM Vijayan's public closeness to Vellappally Natesan, leader of the SNDP Yogam, widely perceived as stridently anti-Muslim the anti-minority campaign unleashed by the CPI(M) with the objective of wooing the Hindu majority actually ended up giving the upper hand to the BJP who managed to bag 3 seats.

This skirting of leftist line to embrace customary bourgeois vote politics made left-minded Kerala voters so irked that a sizeable section of theirs backed the Congress-led UDF. So, victory of the UDF and entrance of the BJP in the state are squarely attributed to the anti-left policies of the CPI (M)-led government.

West Bengal

Results West Bengal might have surprised many but if analyzed deeply, perhaps such an outcome was very much on the cards. On the one hand, people were visibly aggrieved with the ruling TMC for limitless corruption,

scams, extortion, cut money collection, pilferage of public fund, overlordism of the leaders even at grassroot level, illegal occupation of lands, operation of realty syndicates, construction of buildings by filling up marsh lands and what not. Even street hawkers, rickshaw pullers and small shop owners had to regularly pay money to the ruling party satraps to operate. The insolence of the MLAs, panchayat office-bearers, municipality officials and even government personnel reached such a height that even for getting a residential certificate, character certificate or trade licence, obtaining a job card for rural employment scheme or procurement of a ration card were not possible without bribes. The police-administration virtually became subservient to the dictates of not only ministers but even small fries of the TMC.

The most damaging for the TMC has been the school recruitment scam, where more than 25,000 teaching and non-teaching jobs were cancelled following court intervention. It was found that several thousand ineligible candidates were appointed through manipulation (deleting the names of *bona fide* candidates) in exchange for huge sum of money. From the ministers to the education department officials and even the ruling party leaders, everyone was involved in the scam. It was exposed so glaring that education minister Partha Chatterjee, once second in command in the TMC, was jailed after large sums of unaccounted cash and jewellery were recovered from properties linked to his associate. Three more ministers including the food minister had been arrested on various corruption charges during the TMC regime. A slew of key functionaries in different government departments as well as the TMC 'strongmen' were also taken into custody for illegal smuggling or cross-border trafficking of cattle, illegal coal and sand smuggling. The school job scam, in particular, hit a sensitive nerve, directly affecting thousands of aspirants and their families, turning corruption from an abstract charge into a lived grievance. Welfare-linked allegations, such as those tied to ration distribution, further sharpened concerns among poorer sections. Moreover, virtual collapse of the government-run school education, closure of over 11,000 government schools, permeation of corruption in every sphere of healthcare, reckless privatization of education and health sectors also contributed to growing rage of people against the TMC rule. The TMC sought to double down on welfare delivery and direct voter outreach, seeking to shift attention from allegations to distribution of freebies. The continued emphasis on schemes such as 'Lakshmi Bhandar' and 'Kanyashree' reflected this approach. But all such attempts went in vain.

The brutal rape and murder of a female doctor (PGT) inside the building that houses the emergency department (where patients come and go 24 hours a day) of R G Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata on 8 August 2024 night and the over-activism on the part of the college authorities particularly the then principal, his nexus members and the police to hush up all evidences to shield the culprits had awakened the conscience of everyone not only in this state but throughout the country, even overseas. This gruesome rape and murder case also brought to the fore how the rampant corruption, nepotism, were rampant in the *government health department*. Most reprehensible was the attempt by the TMC leadership to shield the culprits of this horrendous crime and instead demonize the junior doctors who rose in vehement protest against such a ghastly act. This too contributed to the accumulated grievance of the people against the TMC regime. So, the people hell bound to dethrone TMC voted for the BJP in a binary polling scenario carefully orchestrated by the ruling bourgeoisie. It was not out of any ideological support to the BJP. It was, what is called, negative voting. Most importantly, elections across India have become increasingly a two-party democracy in style with focusing on two principal contending sides, in terms of visibility, branding, continuous finetuning of campaigning and organizational machinery.

The BJP on the other hand had long been weaving strategy to outsmart the TMC in poll battle. The ground level network of the RSS was extensively activated to elicit support in favour of the BJP. All top BJP leaders starting from PM Modi to Defence Minister, Education Minister as well as BJP chief ministers of UP, Assam and Maharashtra and 40 odds so called "star" campaigners of the BJP including its national president frequented the state at regular intervals. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had camped in the state for over 15 days at a stretch to conduct the election. The entire police-administration were reshuffled to depute pro-BJP personnel in every key position. More than 2 lakh central forces which were deployed across the on the pretext of tightening oversight and curbing allegations of rigging and electoral malpractice, virtually worked as the foot soldiers of the BJP. In many counting centres including Bhowanipur from where the TMC supremo contested, counting was stopped by force, counting agents were asked to leave and then the counting officers were ordered to record the numbers dictated by the BJP representatives on the result sheet instead of compiling votes recorded in the EVM machine. What was this other than blatant administrative rigging?

Besides, anti-Muslim hate campaign was raised to the peak and unsubstantiated propaganda that over 2 crore illegal Bangladeshi Muslims and Rohingyas had infiltrated the state was used as intensifiers to that campaign. Pertinent to mention that while the BJP banked on its crass communal Hindutva agenda to corner polarized Hindu vote, the TMC too peddled, what is called, soft-Hindutva by building a huge Jagannath temple at Digha spending Rs 250 crores from public exchequer, announced constructing a massive temple complex called "Mahakal Mahatirtha" in the Matigara area of Siliguri and a major Durga temple complex in Kolkata named "Durga Angan", obviously to woo Hindu sentiment.

Next one was the motivated exercise of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) with the obvious objective of deleting a sizeable number of genuine voters mostly belonging to the minority community. The months long contentious SIR process culminated in deleting 91 lakh names shrinking the state's voter rolls by 12%. And as we had earlier discussed in details in the Proletarian Era, names were deleted even after the so-called hearing process on ticklish as well as bogus issues. Even after furnishing all requisite documents, names were struck out for reasons better known to the Election Commission which acted like a wing of the ruling BJP and completely manoeuvred the SIR process.

Thus, SIR quietly reshaped the voter landscape across the state. By the time the final rolls were published in February, 27.16 lakh electors –whose names the Election Commission had placed under adjudication – using a coinage logical discrepancy', were deleted. The election went ahead even as lakhs of appeals from those deleted remain pending before 19 appellate tribunals, appointed on the Supreme Court's directions. Thus, many *bona fide* electorates were debarred from casting votes. This was totally unconstitutional.

The BJP's sweep might have many explanations – such as mounting discontent among the people against raging corruption of the TMC, a fractured opposition vote, consolidation of Hindu vote through communal polarization etc. But all of them were subordinated to the SIR exercise. Notably, in 82 constituencies where the BJP emerged victorious, deletions exceeded the victory margin. Of these, 70 were seats that flipped from the TMC to the BJP. Institutional connivance with the BJP, now the most trusted political manager of the ruling monopolists, is a factor that has been most pronounced in this election.

But the question that overrides everything else is how could West Bengal, a citadel of left-democratic movement, has now an extremely right-wing communal fascist autocratic government? The CPI (M) leadership is claiming that the TMC paved the way for the BJP to capture West Bengal. It even propagated a theory of the TMC-BJP 'setting'. But is that the fact? Unfortunately, not.

At the time of freedom movement, the undivided CPI did not fight the Hindu religion-oriented nationalism fostered by the Gandhiji leadership of the National Congress. Rather it virtually abetted it. Secondly, the CPI (M), CPI did not join the JP movement in the 1970s on the pretext of communal Jan Sangh being in it. But when the Janta conglomerate with Jan Sangh (predecessor of the BJP) as one of its constituents formed central government in 1977, the CPI (M) called it a 'friendly government'. It was with the covert support of Janata Party that the CPI (M) won the 1977 election in West Bengal. Thereafter, in 1989, it along with the BJP supported V P Singh government at the centre. In fact, the then CPI (M) chief minister Jyoti Basu and former BJP prime minister Atal Behari Bajpayee held joint meeting in Kolkata maidan. This also helped the RSS-BJP to have a foothold in West Bengal.

During its 34 years of uninterrupted rule, the CPI (M) avidly pursued non-left pro-capitalist policies. Many legitimate democratic movements like the historic education movement against jettisoning English from the primary stage and abolition of pass-fail system upto class VIII, anti-transport fare increase movement, anti-price and tax hike movements and so forth spearheaded by our Party. It ruthlessly suppressed all these movements with the coercive machinery at its disposal as well as using storm-troopers. In 1990, the police gunned down Madhai Halder, a teenager activist of our Party, during anti-price rise movement. Jyoti Basu called this killing as a 'measure to turn a vegetarian movement into a non-vegetarian one'. Around 200 of our leaders and cadres have been murdered by the CPI (M). Even the anti-socials were pressed into action to break the movements. This was raised to a peak when multi-crop fertile land was sought to be forcibly acquired from the peasants and handed over to the monopoly houses, both domestic and foreign, first in Singur and then Nandigram, in the name of boosting industrialization. Besides opening fire on the resisting peasants, rape and gangrape were used as weapons to crush the movements—a phenomenon unheard of in the history of the country. Our Party was in the forefront of all such movements.

In course of following anti-left policies and surge of one after another mass movement against the misrule of the CPI (M)-led government, the CPI (M) as a party became extremely unpopular. The people of the state found no difference between the Congress and the CPI (M) rules. Particularly, extortion, nepotism, planting party nominees in various committees, schools, colleges, universities and state apparatus caused immense discontent among the masses. It was during the CPI (M) rule that realty syndicates sprouted, the police -administration was stripped of its relative neutrality and made subservient to the government dictates. This way, the CPI (M) considerably tarnished the image of leftism in the state. It bears recall that observing the symptoms of the CPI (M) leadership's fast deviation from whatever little leftism was practised by them hereinbefore, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh had warned way back in 1969 that "*...religious fundamentalists like the Jana Sangh (predecessor of the BJP) are waiting in the wings. As soon as whatever attraction the people still have towards left movement evaporates, they would come out in the open. The ruling CPI(M) leaders are not conscious of this danger. Throwing to the wind the communist ideology and its quintessence, they are going on misleading the people with tall talks and sweet words, just as the Congress did. They are thus pulling down the prestige of communism and maligning it.*" (SW Vol III)

Secondly, will a genuine Marxist-Leninist party, if getting chance to run government in a bourgeois order, function like any other bourgeois party? Will it encourage development of class and mass struggles or crush people's movements using coercive state machinery on the pretext of maintaining law and order? Let it be reminded once

again that a guideline in this regard was not provided by great Lenin, as no such situation had arisen in his time. When the first United Front (UF) government of the left and democratic parties took office in West Bengal in 1967 based on popular verdict, a question came up in sharp relief: what shall be the guideline for a pro-people government to run the administration in a capitalist setup. It was Comrade Shibdas Ghosh who, based on Marxist methodology of analysis, provided that guideline. He said let the UF government declare as policy that ‘police shall not interfere in legitimate democratic mass movements’. Explaining the revolutionary significance of this pro-working-class policy, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh said that this would advance mass and class struggles towards the goal of final overthrow of capitalism — thereby providing the left democratic forces of the entire world with the basic governing outlook of a genuinely pro-people government, formed in a capitalist setup. The government instead of crushing democratic movements in the interest of the ruling class would provide all encouragement and widest scope for the growth and development of people’s legitimate movements. He also said that the government should work based on the people’s advice and not depending on the bureaucracy.

The CPI (M) and its allies did not agree to this policy. Then our Party said that in that event, it would not take up any ministry but support the UF government from outside. Caught napping, the CPI (M) ultimately agreed to the proposal presuming that our Party being not that powerful, would not be able to do anything tangible. So, they awarded crucial labour ministry to us thinking it would help discrediting our Party. The CPI (M) and others did not implement this policy from their respective ministerial portfolios. Only Comrade Subodh Banerjee, the departed member of the first Polit Bureau of the SUCI(C), has declared that policy as the labour minister.

This triggered a spurt of working-class movement which shook the ruling bourgeoisie. So, pulling the strings from behind, the ruling class toppled that government within 7 months. But the CPI (M), CPI did not grasp the revolutionary significance of the policy as they did not pursue a revolutionary leftist outlook. It was evident when Jyoti Basu, after taking over the rein of a CPI (M)-led government in West Bengal in 1977, clearly assured the ruling class that there would no more be any chaos or disorder as the SUCI(C) was not a part of that government. That clearly delineated the difference between revolutionary leftism based on correct understanding of Marxism-Leninism and reformist leftism chewing the cud of Marxism.

So, the CPI (M) leadership cannot deny its responsibility of maligning leftism and thereby making room for the BJP to create room in this state. Even for defeating the TMC in election, the CPI (M) leaders asked their followers to vote for the BJP in last two to three elections. “Age Ram pore Bam” (first Ram and then the left)— such was their stand meaning first the BJP would capture power and then once it is discredited, the CPI (M) would be back to the government. Times without number, we had requested the CPI (M) to admit their mistakes in public following Leninist directive and come forward to build up a united militant struggling left alternative to prevent rightist surge. But it did not pay any heed to it. Instead, just for the sake of a few seats, it joined hands with the Congress and ISF, a minority religious organization. So, when people were disgusted with the corrupt rule of the TMC, they could not view the CPI (M) as the alternative. They preferred to rally behind the BJP. Even in this election also, the CPI (M), leaving a few seats where it thought it would be in the contest, reportedly threw its weight behind the BJP to overthrow Mamata Banerjee Thus West Bengal has been handed over to the BJP virtually on a silver platter.

Concluding words

These election results ought to be eyeopeners for all. Elections have been reduced to a farce. This cannot beget emancipation of the toiling millions. Only a surge and intensification of the class and mass struggles under correct revolutionary leadership conducive to the revolutionary movement to overthrow capitalism can free people from the shackles of exploitation of man by man. Till the time the revolution does not come by in course of fulfilling the necessary subjective and objective conditions, what is imperative is to accentuate class and mass struggles. So long people are not positively disillusioned about futility of bourgeois politics of vote, a revolutionary party is compelled to participate in election with this definite revolutionary line to make people politically conscious, imbibe the truth and be prepared for proletarian revolution. Guided by this Leninist principle and holding aloft the banner of struggling leftism, our Party had fought in 230 seats in West Bengal, 32 in Kerala, 36 in Assam, 4 in Tamil Nadu and one in Puducherry based on our organizational strength.

Let us conclude with an invaluable teaching of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh: “...you are to remember is that a change in the present situation is bound to come. Because the bourgeoisie are powerful, because they have in their hands the mighty state power, they will remain like a millstone round our necks and reign for ever — had it been so, it would have been no doubt good for the bourgeoisie and such a thought might give them pleasure — but this never happens. But how soon will come the change — it all depends upon you. How soon will come the revolution, depends on how much time you will require to develop people’s alternative political power in the concrete form of revolutionary councils and people’s committees like the Soviets through unitedly conducting movements organized on the correct base political line and ideology and under the leadership of the real revolutionary party of the

proletariat. But remember, you can never achieve revolution by shirking the real task, just by shouting slogans, or through tricks in the ballot boxes. You can achieve revolution only when you have been able to give birth to people's own political power on the basis of correct revolutionary base political line and ideology and under the leadership of a genuine revolutionary party of the proletariat. Electoral battles that you fight, the democratic movements on economic demands that you build up — if you can view and build up all these struggles as conducive to your main revolutionary struggles, then and then only, these will be purposive. Other than this, all these are meaningless. If you can grasp this, then along with this you also have to understand that the mass movements which you develop have their ups and downs, advances and retreats, successes as also defeats and setbacks — because there are twists and turns along its path. But what is of decisive importance while developing these democratic movements is whether you have been able, on the basis of correct ideology and principles, to correctly determine the base political line and the stage of revolution, i.e., whether you have correctly realized that the main task of this revolution is to overthrow the bourgeoisie that is now in state power in the place of the imperialists.” (Under the banner of great November Revolution SW Vol III)