Obituary of a liberal Democracy
Ushering in Hindu Rashtra

The recently concluded Parliamentary election (2019) is a watershed in the evolution of polity in India after independence. It was the most bitterly fought election which was noteworthy for several reasons. It was mired throughout in the controversy about the reliability of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). Besides voting being spread over an unusually long period, the campaigning that preceded it plunged to the lowest depth in the use of language ever used by the PM against the rivals and peddling unsubstantiated claims of achievements and simply ignoring the most thorny issues facing the country. It was particularly marked by minority bashing more specifically the Muslims, doubting their loyalty and instigating hatred against them with threats of expulsion from the country. There was a calculated move at sharply polarizing the campaign on communal lines with a view to achieving Hindu consolidation in voting behaviour and viciously projecting opposition leaders as anti-Hindu who have been appeasing Muslims to use them as their vote bank. The election campaign was also unique in that the PM himself extensively covered all regions and particularly those where the States are ruled by opposition parties so as to make a decisive push to dislodge them (West Bengal) and make inroads into those where his party has had no success in penetration so far (Kerala). With nothing positive to show by way of economic betterment or fulfillment of promises made in the last election, the entire campaign riveted on building hyper nationalist passions and creating fear of insecurity against threats, external and internal, among people to divert their attention. But the election campaign was unparalleled in self-promotion by the Prime Minister (more brazenly than what former Prime Minster, Indira Gandhi did) as a strong leader who alone can protect India against these threats. Far more disturbing and unsettling aspect of this election campaign was that it transformed it from competition between Parties for people to choose from for forming the next government in a parliamentary system to a presidential one with the chief executive appealing to the people directly and not as the leader of a party, to vote for him against rival opposition leaders. For the first time, the electoral campaign of the ruling party and its leader unabashedly aroused instincts of majoritarian assertion in utter disregard to the constitutional ethos, the diverse nature of Indian society and the pluralistic synthesis of its culture.

The results were stunning. It was a political earthquake beyond the imagination of political watchers and informed citizens, let alone the calculations and predictions of the political analysts and psepoelogists. As the news of the dominant partner in the ruling coalition achieving a comfortable majority on its own trickled in, the rival political parties were shaken with disbelief. Even the ruling party candidates were taken in by surprise as the size and scale of support from the people was beyond their expectation. The victory achieved several milestones. In the PM's own words, chemistry (Modi Persona) trumped Arithmetics (of Caste calculations). It defeated the incumbency. Rather, the incumbency appears to have boosted the prospects of the ruling coalition, judging by the larger number of seats won and the higher margin of winning candidates.The negative dimensions of incumbency – poor showing of economy, rising unemployment,farmer distress, disastrous demonetization and introduction of GST without adequate preparation were skilfully neutralized by diversion to the hype created on security in a manner that made PM personally as the unambiguous and preferred choice across the country except for just three southern states. The PM's persona was so intoxicating that people ignored

issues, programmes, ideologies of the political parties not to speak of their manifestoes for the 'leader'. The dominant ruling party in the coalition even reversed the gains made by Congress a few months ago in three states of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. The greatest surprise was UP (Uttar Pradesh) where the BJP (Bhartiya Janta Party) with its minor partners emerged again as the overwhelming political choice of people against all odds – Mahagatbandhan (Super Coalition) of SP (Samajwadi Party), BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) and RLD (Rashtriya Lokdal) poor governance record of Chief Minister, Adityanath and the party's own calculation that it may lose a sizable number of seats. The party made inroads into States which were considered the fortress of the regional parties – 8 seats in Odisha where BJD (Biju Janta Dal) dominates, 4 seats in Telangana where only a few months back Telangana Rashtrya Samiti (TRS) retained its overwhelming popularity in Assembly election. The most spectacular result was achieved in West Bengal where BJP (Bhartiya Janta Party) gained first ever major thrust with a huge number of 18 seats against Trinamool Congress's dominance and emerged as the main opposition, decimating in the process both the Left Front and the Congress, notwithstanding the large scale violence that accompanied it on both sides. BJP also trounced Congress - JD(S) (Janta Dal (Secular)) ruling coalition in Karnataka so badly as to corner virtually all seats. It trumped the significant gains made by UPA (United Progressive Alliance) led by Congress in the Gujarat Assembly election by retaining its supremacy. NDA (National Democratic Alliance) victory in Maharashtra was even more significant where it not only eclipsed the Congress but even the resistance NCP (National Congress Party) proved to be of not much avail and farmer protests and incumbency making no difference at all. In Assam, even sharp division among people caused by the controversial Citizenship Bill, and social turmoil resulting from the implementation of the NRC , and incumbency made no difference at all to the votes it polled and seats captured across social groups. The North eastern states which were steadfast in their opposition to the Citizenship Bill and the large Christian population, of which feels threatened by BJP's anti-Christian ideology, the ruling coalition forged by BJP in these states did not encounter any serious challenge. Barring the three southern states of TN, AP, Kerala ruled by regional parties and Punjab in the north with Congress Party in power which successfully resisted the advances of NDA juggernaut, no strategy, tactics or social engineering of mobilization worked anywhere else.

It was not merely the scale and geographical spread of the victory which brought out the acceptability of BJP across the country and the preferred choice of people for a second term, but also its appeal across States some of which are ruled by regional parties. It garnered the largest vote share of 37% (exceeding 50% in a dozen states) including most populous Bihar, UP and Maharashtra which was matched by the number of seats it was able to win. It secured the highest vote share of 69.1% in Himachal Pradesh, higher than even Gujarat (62.2%). Congress suffered the most humiliating defeat for the second time in a row reducing its vote share to 19% and having no presence at all in 19 of the 27 states. Its chief and prime ministerial candidate, Rahul Gandhi lost from its family pocket borough, Amethi. His victory from Wayanad (Kerala) which was the second seat he contested saved the face. Its prominent leaders such as Digvijay Singh, and Jyotindra Nath Scindia were left to bite the dust. Left Parties were virtually decimated and Left Front has now such a negligible presence in Lok Sabha that it would lose its office there and may also lose the status as a national party. With SP (Samajwadi Party) reduced to just 5 seats and BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) to 10, the dreams of their leaders to be contenders for the Prime Ministerial chair in the event of a non-NDA coalition forming the Government at the centre lie shattered.Also, trounced was Chandrababu Naidu, leading the TDP (Telugu Desam Party) in

Andhra Pradesh where he was comprehensively defeated by his rival, Jaganmohan Reddy of YSR Congress. Even K. ChandrasekharRao, Chief Minister, Telangana was so rattled by the first ever foray of BJP in his state with a creditable 4 seats that he may be forced to rethink of his politics and priorities in governance. Only the BJD in Odisha and Trinamul Congress in W. Bengal were able to put some resistance among the regional parties but not without the BJD conceding unprecedented 8 seats to BJP and Trinamul Congress found itself in no position to prevent BJP victory in 18 seats.

The overpowering regional spread of victory of the ruling coalition was equally matched by its support across social groups. Among the upper castes, BJP continues to be the unalterable choice due to their conviction that it alone can ensure their dominance in society and polity. Among the OBCs, barring the dominant caste of Yadavs who form the support base of SP in UP and RJD (Rashtriay Janta Dal) in Bihar, the ruling coalition was able to bring within its fold all other smaller OBC parties thereby enlarging its support base. It snatched a share in the Yadav votes too. Among the SCs (Scheduled Castes) who form the support base of BSP, it was able to enlist support of the non jatavs by liberally distributing tickets to them in UP and taking them as coalition partners wherever there was a strong organization and a leader among Dalits such as the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (ABA) in Maharashtra led by RD Athawale. Among the Adivasis it was able to neutralize even the formidable Mahagatbandhan of regional and non-Left Parties in Jharkhand taking 11 out of 14 seats and defeating in the process, the Adivasi icon, Sibu Soren of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha notwithstanding the incumbency of its government and 19 starvation deaths in the preceding year or so. Similarly, in MP, Chhattisgarh, Odisha where Adivasis have a significant presence –, it was able to capture a good number of seats in the constituencies reserved for them through sustained work of RSS to assimilate them in the Hindu fold. As for minorities, Muslims were completely shunned. BJP did not care for their votes let alone court them. It has a lone Muslim candidate from UP who was a Minister in the last Government as the only presence in Lok Sabha though its coalition partners contributed one more to the Parliament. The level of support its received and seats it won could not have been possible without the enthusiastic backing of women voters in the households. BJP, however, did not make any gender friendly gesture by putting up more women candidates. Only two regional parties, the BJD and TMC showed their genuine commitment to women with the former giving them a share of 33% and the latter a share of 50% in distribution of tickets which has resulted in women in 17th Lok Sabha getting highest share of 78 MPs. The common thread binding this large support base was that, for the first time, voters from the majority community cast their votes as 'Hindus', unfragmented by their other identities and interests, having been successfully sucked into the Hindutva ideological stream so assiduously propagated by RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) workers over a period of time through their ground work. This, of course, does not imply that some of these voters may have had other reasons to support the continuation of the NDA government at the central level for another term..

How was this phenomenal victory accomplished? Political analysts in the media over the past month or so have attributed it to several factors. The most prominent of these factors was use of complex mix of tools for strategizing it. MODI-SHAH duo have emerged as the most formidable strategists and psephelogists having mastered the art of winning elections. They revel in it having tasted success in Gujarat for continuously for more than 5 years and now in Assembly and Parliament elections in the country. Additionally, they have fire under the belly to retain power and spread across the country so as to realize their ideological dream of effectuating

a Hindu Rashtra. Amit Shah, president of BJP (and now the Home Minister) is a politicalholic delving into 24x7 politics. This was reflected in advance planning far ahead of the election. Technological tools were intensively used to provide the needed information about constituencies, social composition of voters living in them, regional political impulses, information about candidates, organizational presence, weakness and strength of rival political parties and their candidates and reputation of their own leaders. Data mining and its analytics by bright young IT professionals made availability of this information possible. This enabled the strategic planning, constituency wise, mapping out directions where timely interventions were needed and appropriate measures to be taken to ensure a victory. These measures included social engineering for building up a comprehensive support base and trumping the strategy of caste arithmetic of rival political parties, winning over erstwhile supporters who were drifting way, tapping into the anxieties of others so as to address them with some sops and building support in those who received some benefit from the programmes of the Government. It was this advance planning which was used to garner support of different sections of the population particularly the poor. These sops included providing reservation of 10% EWS (Economically Weaker Sectional) quota in Central government jobs and educational institutions to assuage the upper castes which were lately unhappy with BJP, delivering direct cash benefit to farmers through Kissan Samman scheme to douse the fire of their distress, giving gas cylinder to poor households through Ujjawala Scheme to tap the women voters, making financial assistance available for buildings houses through PMAY (Prime Minister's Awas Yojna) to the rural and urban poor, introducing a pension scheme for unorganized workers, arranging Mudra loan to unemployed youth for taking up income generating activities, and declaring income tax concessions for the lower slab of tax payers belonging to the lower middle classes. The Citizenship Bill and expeditious implementation of NRC were specifically targeted to voters in Assam, NRC to address the anxieties of Assamese about erosion of their dominance, and loss of their language and culture and Citizenship Bill to garner support among Bengali Hindu immigrants. This ensured the widest possible support base in the State. The execution of this strategy on the ground was effectively carried out by the well-oiled party machinery – grass root level 6 lakh motivated RSS workers, a disciplined party organization with a strong central leadership and fully compliant subordinate formations. This elaborate plan of action was monitored by the party chief and overseen through frequent visits. Formal media ensured prominent coverage of news of the ruling party with PM in the focus and social media was unleashed to counter the opposition's narrative and to hammer in the version of the regime. The central agencies like the CBI Enforcement Directorate were used to raid the premises of opposition leaders with a view to launching cases of corruption against them and discrediting them in the eyes of voters. Projecting the achievement of the Government and the leader was the task accomplished by marketing agencies. Financial resources for all this was no problem as the controversial 'electoral bonds' scheme where the donor to a political party does not have to disclose its identity, introduced by the Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley in 2017 ensured that the ruling party received an overwhelmingly large share of this fund. These measures were topped by the oratory and communication skills of the PM, the single and simple narrative of his message built around security from external and internal threats, and arousal of nationalist fervour. This narrative and messaging was suitably tailored to voters in different regions keeping their specificities in view and laced it with anti-minority rhetoric where Muslims constituted a sizable presence. All through the campaign, PM castigated the opposition leaders for their corruption, dynastic rule, hunger for power and lacking in cohesion with each one among them manoeuvring to become

the Prime Minster in the event of a hung Parliament. He hammered in the point that a government formed by a coalition of such leaders would be a 'helpless' (Majboor) government and ineffective in securing the country from terrorism and carrying out development of the country to realize the aspirations of people. Only a strong leader (like him) could ensure security and development of this country and should be trusted to deliver these goals. The fact that he succeeded in convincing people of the genuineness of this narrative and building trust in his persona was evident from the widespread perception of voters (without any basis though) (Kumar, 2019) that he was their choice because he taught Pakistan a lesson by surgical strikes across the border (which they presumed, no other government earlier had done) and killing of terrorists (without any proof) enhanced the prestige and status of the country abroad and should be relied upon to deliver other promises.

The opposition was no match to this level of preparedness and the killer instinct of the party leaders. It was divided, unable to unite to fight together, despite being convinced that political parties constituting it faced the threat to their political survival by the tactics adopted by the ruling regime. No alliance at all India level could be forged and even the state level coalitions could materialize only in UP, Bihar, Tamilnadu and Jharkhand. However, the UP alliance did not include Congress in its fold. This forced Congress to contest alone and in the process cut into the votes of the alliance partners of Mahagatbandhan without damaging the voter support of BJP. The reason for lack of alliance to emerge to take on the BJP unitedly was that each party was negotiating with the objective of strengthening its position in the bargain. But, in retrospect, even if such an alliance had materialized, it would have made little difference as the Modi cult had taken firm roots in their thought process. Besides, the opposition presented a picture of utter fragmentation with neither a common leader not a programme of action to present as an attractive alternative before the people. Also, Congress was the only party with an all India presence and with a long history of being in power. But it was weak in every respect. It had no grass root level organization anymore and was never a cadre based party in any case. Its state level organizations are ridden with factionalism and had no cohesion, discipline or ideological motivation. Its leaders were interested in getting tickets for their relatives or loyalists. It was thus in no position to take on the BJP. It neither had the strategy nor the organization to take the message of the party to the people. Decisions on distribution of tickets came very late from the high command which provided little time to the contestants for preparation. The party also suffered from paucity of resources, matching social media reach and a simple and coherent narrative. Its manifesto was no doubt superior to that of BJP. But it came late and its promise of basic minimum to income poor households was too complex for the poor to grasp. Its repetitive accusation of 'Chowkidar Chor Hai' against the Prime Minister failed to click. (Gupta, 2019)[2] The messaging had no single and easily comprehendible idea which could attract people to it compared to what Modi was offering. The speeches of its leader failed to counter the 'security' and 'nationalism' themes of Modi. Congress's questioning of Modi's claim about Balkot strike was cleverly turned against it as yet another attempt to demoralize the armed forces and playing into the hands of Pakistan. It was simply out of wits to deal with this kind of deviousness. Worse, the party and it leader deliberately chose not to project the secular alternative, having itself succumbed to soft Hindutva in its campaign. In short, for the common man, Congress failed to provide a captivating alternative offer for people to choose against even the false claims of Modi on surgical strikes and killing of terrorists in Pakistan. Rahul Gandhi's valiant fight till the end was of no avail even in States where it had snatched a victory against the BJP in Assembly elections just a few months ago. Its inability to counter the aggressive and Machiavellian thrust

of Modi, campaign was compounded by some biased decisions of the CEC (Central Election Commission) and partisan coverage of the formal media. Yet the expectation was that people would be able to judge the performance of NDA on issues projected and make a wise choice. That was not to be. For people the choice was between Modi and everything else and they had made up their mind in favour of Modi. (Bhushan, 2019). Against this abiding faith in the person of Modi, the campaign of opposition leader mattered little. What formed the basis of such perception is yet to be investigated in depth. Though political analysts have attributed it to absence of corruption during 2014-2017 rule, ability to deliver welfare schemes to the people improvement in infrastructure, (Gupta, 2019)[1] his humble origins as a chaiwala (tea seller) vis-à-vis the elitist background of the rival. These claims however, would not stand to detailed scrutiny. The image building in favour of Modi has not emerged merely from campaigning for elections. It has been systematically pursued by the Prime Minister, himself through direct address to the people (Man Ki Baat) at frequent intervals backed up by, use of formal and social media and engagement with people at the grassroots by RSS workers during the last 5 years in a manner that common people only get to see his dominating presence and learn about the work he was doing.

After the initial disbelief of the NDA's comprehensive victory subsided, reality dawned on what this victory conveyed and the wide range of implications it has for the society and polity. The election was viewed as a 'tectonic shift' (Bhushan, 2019) in political ideology which evolved of the State from independence struggle to the ushering in the constitutional democracy and thereafter. It was described as the end of the Nehru-Gandhi Yuga and the beginning of Modi yuga (Desai, 2019). For the intelligentsia, the construction of this polity was a revolution of sorts crafted after a long struggle to get rid of colonial rule and forging a consensus on how we should be governed in future. This system of governance based on constitutional democracy was built around rule of law, celebration of social diversity, assertion of pluralistic culture, tolerance of dissent, protection of fundamental rights-equality, freedom and fraternity with pursuit of social justice and sanctity, autonomy and political neutrality of institutions established under it which were tasked to defend this edifice against assaults from vested interests in politics and society. This revolution, no doubt, was far from being robust, facing as it did several bruises in its journey and the wounds inflicted on it by ambitious leaders, entrenched social and economic inequalities, capturing institutions of governance by traditional and evolving hierarchies of power. It also faced serious challenges to its legitimacy from disaffected people struggling to be heard and accommodated. Yet its core values were never questioned and its ethos never rubbished or sought to be replaced by an illiberal one rooted in tradition. The phenomenal victory of NDA therefore represented a counter revolution and an unequivocal rejection of liberalism which permeates the constitution. (Bhushan, 2019) It was a vote for authoritarian rule by a strong leader (2019, Khare) rather than deepening of democracy and equitable and humanistic governance. Electoral victory 2019 put a stamp of approval on this shift, valuing a 'Mazboot Sarkar' under the stewardship of a strong leader backed up by a disciplined organization against a more consensual decision making but more equitable sharing of power among different political groups. The victory also signalled a change from a democracy representing diverse sections of people, plurality of cultures and interests to a majoritarian one where Hindus would dominate polity and society and minorities would have to live at their pleasure, respect their sentiments and traditions and conform to their values. (Hassan, 2019) This is what constitutes cultural nationalism of the RSS. It is a clear retreat from the existing constitutional architecture which is secular in character and protects rights of minorities. The

victory also manifests resurgence of traditional hierarchies of power dominated by the upper castes within the Hindu social order which felt most threatened by rise of lower castes and loosening of their relationship of subordination and their diminishing importance in politics and society. They feel most reassured by BJP for protecting their pre-eminence. This is amply brought out by regressive policies pursued during Modi 01 (2014-19) and therefore a set back to the slow pace of incremental social reforms that were taking place through affirmative action. A polity based on Hindutva ideology has very adverse implications for Dalits and Adivasis who are most oppressed by these hierarchies.

The 2019 election results have also transformed the nature of politics from a complex interplay of forces triggered by social and economic changes affecting different interests and social groups, aspirations of emerging classes exposed to liberalization and globalization. Impact of technology and degradation of environment etc on society to the simple choice of a leader where nothing else matters is hugely unsettling and disturbing. (Visvanathan, 2019). In this change of politics, institutions, programmes, ideologies, performance of candidates, do not matter. Even variety of choices loses relevance. People are simply persuaded to a leader and leave the rest to him/her. The elaborate institutions and processes of Politics are just reduced to instrumentalities of a leader's rule. This has the potential of generating disaffection among adversely affected groups as they find no 'space' from where to relate to the wielders of power and no mode of articulation of their problems and seeking their redressal. The other dimension of political change is the structural transformation of polity. The wide endorsement of NDA across the country, and the reduced share of votes and seats won by the regional parties in UP, W. Bengal, Maharashtra, Telangana, AP (TDP), BJD, Haryana would further erode the fledgling federalism already under strain with the onset of globalized economy. The huge dependence of States on Central government for financial resources, increasing encroachment by National security agencies and paramilitary forces into the domain of States in law and order, continuing attempts to engineer defections from regional parties to the ruling party, the increasing number of central schemes and political consideration guiding the distribution of central funds to states are all transforming the federal structure into a de facto unitary one. The centralization and homogenization of the polity that is already taking place and which would increase enormously with one nation, one system, one culture, one election rhetoric would stifle the urges of people in the different regions' to chart out their own path of development and governance and not to be swamped by ideology of the ruling dispensation of the Centre. Not only this, even political institutions face erosion of their relevance and vibrancy. Parliament has been enormously weakened with the reduction of opposition to a virtual non-entity and absence of tall leaders to take on the PM and his team. Debates in Parliament may lose their quality and reduce to tokenistic attempts to corner the government. Even the BJP stands diminished with this result because the party gets subsumed under the leader and would have little courage to differ from him or to put a check on his unrestrained exercise of power. As it is, the PM through his governance style has concentrated power in himself which is exercised with the assistance of officials of his choice. Even a Constitutional structure like the cabinet system has lost its character as an institution of in depth collection deliberation as the Ministers do not have much of a 'real' say in decision making. No one dare oppose the PM and express disagreement against his decisions since they all owe their position to his mass appeal. It is a frightening prospect to be governed by such an authoritarian arrangement with no prospect an effective challenge in the foreseeable future. (Khare, 2019).

NDA rule since 2014 has been marked by sharp communal polarization in speeches and actions and attack on minorities particularly Muslims evidenced by incidents of mob lynching of unsuspecting persons by cow vigilantes for alleged beef eating and cow slaughter. Even legitimate cattle trade involving transportation of cows, / bulls etc was not spared, if Muslims were involved in it. Muslims have also been attacked for no other provocation than the visual symbols of their identity such as skull cap, the beard and dress. Hotels and restaurants owned by Muslims have been attacked on suspicion of serving beef. This has been compounded by absence of any serious action against perpetrators of attacks. On the other hand, victims of lynching have been prosecuted and jailed. Incidents of Muslims being forced to sing 'Vande Matram', shout 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and also get beaten up are occurring almost every day. BJPs landslide victory has greatly emboldened them. The cow vigilantism was preceded by love Jihad campaign against Muslim boys for marrying Hindu girls and, in some cases, for simply talking to them or moving with them in public spaces, and Ghar Wapsi campaign for converting Muslims to Hinduism. This was accompanied by aggressive attempt to impose Hindutva values in public life such as ban on selling meat, closure of slaughter houses on occasions of Hindu festivals and display of overt religiosity in behaviour of leaders including the Prime Minister. Severe pressures continue to be exerted on the Government by Hindu organizations like Vishwa Hindu Parishad, to push construction of Ram Mandir, if necessary, by legislative action. Land acquired near the Ram Janam Bhoomi by the Government post Babri Masjid demolition was recently returned to the original owners as a facilitating measure for this purpose. The communal polarization continued during election campaign with the repeated accusation of neglect of and discrimination against Hindus while appeasing Muslims against Congress and regional parties and the assurance to the people that BJP would eliminate this victimization. The overwhelming support BJP received in 2019 election and increase in its vote among all sections of Hindus unmistakably points to Hindu consolidation. The grand victory is, therefore, being interpreted by the ideologues of the BJP and allies as an endorsement of Hindutva which gives them a mandate to take it forward and establish a truly 'Hindu Rashtra'.

What lies ahead? The first attempt of the BJP would be to further enlarge its support among people by engineering defections from other parties, particularly in States where it was checkmated by strong regional parties. Its top priority is to consolidate its position in the Parliament. It would encourage cross over to its side members of Rajya Sabha from other parties with a view to making up lack of majority in that house which is needed to gets its Bills passed and other policy measures endorsed. It would seek total dominance in the legislative domain of the type Congress had enjoyed immediately after independence. We may witness strength of opposition parties, particularly Congress getting further depleted which would increase their demoralization. Minorities, particularly Muslims face a bleak and insecure future with continuing attacks on their identity and incidents of violence. They are already getting reconciled to their status as second class citizens deprived of essential rights National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise on completion would make lakhs of them stateless and they are likely to be detained in camps in abysmal conditions with uncertainty and demoralization. NRC may exercise get extended to other States, as the Government of India order has already empowered States to carry it out on their own. Given their precarious position many Muslims may join BJP and accept its ideology just to survive.

The space for protection of human rights' by civil rights activities would shrink further. The ideology of the Government as articulated by the PM himself expressly focuses on 'duties'

(not 'rights'). Rights, in his view, flow from duties and, therefore, human rights activists taking up the cause of victims of oppression by Government and non-Government actors would be dubbed as 'Urban Naxals' and would face prosecution under draconian laws to silence them and deter others from following their path. There would be further curbs on expression of dissent Sedition law which came under severe attack in the recent past for its wrong use would be made even more stringent, as former Home Minister, Rajnath Singh had announced during the election campaign. Political parties would dare not defend secularism and take up the cause of minorities for fear of Hindu Voters being mobilized by BJP against them. They would internalize soft Hindutva so as not alienate the Hindu voters like the Congress did during this election. Ram Mandir would get constructed either by pressuring Muslim community to voluntarily agree to it.

Muslims may succumb to this pressure in their present predicament and state of siege with no support from the so called 'secular' parties and reluctance of Supreme Court to decide the case pending before it. In case of this option not materializing, Supreme Court pressured mediation and, as a last resort, a legislation may achieve the objective. BJP already has the number in Lok Sabha and would shortly acquire it in Rajya Sabha too for the latter option.

Adivasis and Dalits would continue to suffer increasing disempowerment by relentless dilution of affirmative action – reservation, laws enacted in their favour for providing security and economic empowerment. Adivasis would experience continuing and more sustained pressure of hinduisation of their culture and religions and their assimilation in the Hindu Social order while the Dalits would suffer violence and aggression by caste Hindus for defying norms of caste order and their attempts at assertion of equality. Both would get further marginalized in the economy and society, while getting tokenistic representation in the Government. In this political eco-system, Hindutva Polity and society would get firmed up without the need for tinkering with the Constitution. None of the existing institutions would be able to resist this onslaught of majoritarian assertion and authoritarian governance.

There is going to be no let up against militarization of naxalite areas and resultant violence, incarceration of innocent people on suspicion of being naxalites, continuing pursuit of policies depriving them of land and forest resources and increasing penetration of national and foreign capital in their area for resource extraction. There is no prospect at all of a halt to militaristic approach to resolve Kashmir problem or of initiation of a political dialogue with youth or political outfits opposed to this approach. This was made very clear by the present Home Minister in the Parliament. True to its manifesto and declarations, Art 370 along with 35A would be scrapped and delimitation of constituencies would be carried out to revise numerical representation in state legislature.

Ideological and Political consideration would determine selection to decision making positions. Government has already asserted its right to veto selection of judges for High Courts & Supreme Court by the collegians. Transformation of universities, particularly those which have been marked for encouraging critical thinking, free exchange of ideas, and commitment to openness in academic discourse would continue to be pursued with vigour by filling up teaching posts with candidates conforming to the Hindutva ideology, controlling what is taught to, researched and read by students through regulation of syllabi. The courses would be designed primarily to create necessary skills required for absorption of students in the economy after completion of their courses. Public institutions would fail to stand up to the pressure of the government resulting in erosion of autonomy and loss of credibility. Media – both print and

visual in any case, has already 'adjusted' itself to the expectations of the regime Digital media may also be forced to fall in line. On the economic front, more aggressive push for further reforms – privatization, divestment, dilution of labour laws, concessions to corporates for attracting investment, replacement of subsidized public goods with Direct Benefit transfer are some of the measures expected to orient the economy to the needs and interests of the 'aspirational' upwardly mobile middle class and the investors.

Brace up to the Hindu Rashtra consecrated by the electoral democracy.

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