

India - May 16 Forenoon: “Demons” Remain Bottled Up: Deceptive Victory Cry for Neo-liberalism?

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It is evidently easy and pretty alluring to predict after things have already taken place. And Marxists, in particular, are notoriously proficient.

That makes it all the more difficult to resist the temptation of quoting my observation posted last morning, a day before the counting commenced: *“This election was, by common consent, an “issueless” one. Admittedly because the prospects of the Hindu nationalist BJP coming to power have widely been perceived as rather feeble.”* But to be fair, it also put forth: *“No one, however, expects any lilacs springing up out of the dead land, at the end of the day. But demons may still emerge sneaking out of the corked bottle. These vague yet dark fears remain to be assuaged by the actual outcome. Let’s hope that the (rather surprising) worst doesn’t materialise.”*

As the first results are pouring in, it is more than abundantly clear that the bottle in which the “demons” were trapped, so to say, in last, 14th, Lok Sabha elections has been further tightly corked.

The Congress, by itself, has done much better than generally expected, and what had been predicted by the exit polls. The Left has done much worse than it did last time and worse than what was being expected of them. The BSP has also floundered. The BJD, as it looks, is doing much better than expected. But the Third Front, which had been rather aptly termed as an overnight “parking lot”, has fared rather miserably.

Precisely because, “the (rather surprising) worst” has not materialised, there would be a palpable mood of relief amongst very large sections of the populace. That would also ensure the clichéd appreciation of the Indian voters would be repeated over and over.

The “revival” of the Congress could also encourage at least some of the “experts” to predict India moving towards an effectively “two-party” system, regardless of the hard evidences to the contrary.

But the real danger is if the results of the last Lok Sabha election had been interpreted as a vote against communalism and a strong rebuff to the “Shining India” slogan, which was perceived to have added insult to the injury of appalling poverty of the quintessential *“aam aadmi (and aurat)”*; *this time the media would launch a full steam campaign that this result is an endorsement of the Manmohan brand of neo-liberalism. Tomorrow morning, we’d, in all likelihood, be confronted with such banner headlines in the “national” newspapers*. Deliberately ignoring the mixed and somewhat contradictory track records of the Congress-led UPA government and the message it chose to send out during the present elections. And there is no reason to believe that the Congress leadership won’t allow itself to be deluded. The model of “development”, which is just not anti-people and anti-ecology but has also led to the current global economic downturn triggering a rethink on the global scale, would be again be held up as a “model” before the Indian public regardless of the palpable shift in the global mood.

And, not only that, a section within the Congress would prod the party towards a “working

understanding" with the BJP - a sort of "bipartisan" approach - to keep all radical influences out.

Similarly, the severe setback for the Left is hardly expected to act as a much needed corrective. They are mostly like Bourbons - they learn nothing and forget nothing.

So while we heartily welcome the decisive defeat of the dark "demons", the common people will have to gird up their loins for the hard struggles ahead. But thank our stars, there would be some space for that. At least for a while. The rest would depend on us.

Sukla

Celebrations begin in Congress, gloom in BJP

The Economic Times, 16 May 2009, 1033 hrs IST, IANS

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/4538195.cms>

NEW DELHI: With trends indicating a big victory for the Congress, hundreds of supporters thronged the party headquarters at Akbar Road and the nearby residence of president Sonia Gandhi, many breaking out into a celebratory jig to the bursting of firecrackers.

Two hours into counting, chants of "Jai Ho" broke out among Congress cadres as some TV channels announced "Manmohan Singh to remain PM".

Drummers had already reached the the Congress office. Scores of young people were seen milling around, dancing and shouting "We want Rahul Gandhi as PM".

'Havans' (fire rituals) were held outside the Congress office by a 19-year-old hardcore supporter, who went by the name of Prince Singh. He said he was organising these public prayers for a "Congress sweep and development for the country".

There was no early reaction from major party leaders, who still were glued to television and not wanting to give any premature reaction lest the trends get reversed, which seemed extremely unlikely at the moment.

Gloom descended on the headquarters of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with party supporters looking glum and disbelieving. Many of their leaders like V.K. Malhotra, Balbir Punj and others were huddled together but had no reactions to pestering media.