

Narinder Modi's Administration and 2019 Parliamentary Election

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Abstract: *The National Democratic Alliance govt was formed in May 2014 after BJP led NDA coalition secured a total of 336 Lok Sabha seats and delivered a serious blow to the UPA II govt in general and congress in particular. The BJP on its own secured 282 seats while its allies secured 54 seats. This was a watershed moment in the Indian democracy as it was after 1984 general elections that any single party has been able to cross the magical parliamentary electoral threshold figure. The 2014 election is said to have redefined Indian politics and is being considered as tectonic shift within Indian political system. With about a year to go for 2019 general elections, politics in India is turning high voltage undergoing fast political churning and wheeling dealing on the part of different political parties. The 2019 would be like 2014 elections the largest democratic exercise on earth. Although opinion polls predict in favor of BJP but with the recent by poll defeats of BJP in various states and the attempts of opposition parties towards forging Mahagathbandhan, 2019 is believed to be no cakewalk for BJP & co. The party will need to address the challenges of varying nature for staying in electoral fray against opposition.*

Keywords: Byelections, vote share, Lok Sabha, Hindutva, coalition, voter mobilization

I. INTRODUCTION

The Narinder Modi led 16th Lok Sabha is about to complete its term of five years in summer 2019. In about Twelve months Indian voters from Kanyakumari down to Kashmir will undergo the democratic exercise of electing the members of Indian Parliament. The 2019 general elections would be, like the previous general elections largest democratic exercise in world with more than 850 million voters. After the landslide victory of BJP in 2014 general elections and subsequent success of the party in state elections, the political observers assert that BJP would carry through the 2019 elections. The opinion polls also reveal that Modi remains highly popular after about four years in office and the party has methodologically through Modi-Shah school of election management expanded its footprints far and wide. The colour of India's political map has been drastically changed leaving INC in a deep sea of worries. The politico- electoral map of India has been saffronised in 20 out of 29 states with or without alliances. It includes large states like UP which has 80 Lok Sabha seats, Maharashtra with 48 seats, Madhya Pradesh with 29 seats, Bihar with 50 seats and in total these states constitute 392 seats out of 543 Lok Sabha seats without the support of TDP of Andhra Pradesh and PDP in J&K which have recently severed ties from NDA govt at center. The slogan of "Chalo chale, Modi ke saath" and the theme of "minimum govt, maximum governance" had very profound effect on the outcome of the state elections in favor of BJP. The Modi wave has turned electoral tables upside down and swept the state assemblies elections resulting in what Praveen Rai and Sanjay Kumar of Centre for studies of developing societies (CSDS) called Tectonic shift in Indian politics. Prior to 2014 general elections the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) had control on only eight states.¹ With little over than a year to go for parliamentary elections, politics in India is turning high voltage as most of the political parties seem to be in an already activated campaigning mode. The ruling BJP has launched Mission 360+ in continuation of its successful Mission 272 of 2014. The opposition parties including one time "Dominant Party", Indian National Congress but nowadays "Rubble Party" and several other state and regional parties have also put their feet on accelerator. The two major parties BJP and INC along with their allies would lock horns for securing parliamentary electoral threshold.

¹ Hindustan Times Apr, 16, 2018

There are some perplexing and pertinent questions related with the general elections of 2019. The questions like, will Modi's magic and Amit shah school of election management deliver again for BJP and turn India into what BJP calls "Congress Mukht India"? would it be a cakewalk for BJP in 2019 and thereby result in emergence of non congress party govt for two successive terms in India's electoral history of 68 years for the first time?, would congress rise again and repeat the history as it did after fall of Janata party govt in 1979 and NDA govt of Vajpayee in 2004?, would 2019 be another 2004 for BJP, can federal front idea of K Chandershakher Rao by combining disgruntled parties of NDA govt and several other parties take shape?, would it be now Non –BJPism versus NDA or would it simply be what former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Omar Abdullah confessed on Twitter that "the opposition does not have chance in 2019; perhaps building for 2024 is the only option".² All these questions require wisdom and foresight for prediction. BJP looks increasingly invincible in the contemporary Indian political landscape.³ The opinion polls also clearly predict infavour of BJP, but of late the political scenario is witnessing some unexpected churns leading political observers to believe that the 2019 may not be a foregone conclusion as was assumed to be. This was also highlighted by mood swing survey carried out by centre for studies of developing societies (CSDS). In the first MOTN (mode of the nation) poll carried out by CSDS in May 2017 on 11373 respondents across 19 states, it was found that nearly seven out of ten voters (69%) are satisfied with performance of Modi as Prime Minister and in case of snap poll in 2017 BJP would be the vote choice of 39%(eight percentage points higher than 2014 elections). However eight months later after second round of MOTN survey in January 2018, public opinion was moving against the Modi govt and in case of snap poll in 2018 BJP would in all likelihood secure just 34% of total votes (only 3% above 2014) and it was found that the direct beneficiary of this slight dip in BJP share was congress.⁴ Furthermore one must also agree with the view of journalist Prashant Jha that "Indian politics is quite unpredictable and the democracy has its own mechanism of checks and balances".⁵

II. REVIEW/ ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT NDA GOVT FROM 2014-2018

In order to analyses the prospects of NDA in 2019 general elections, it is necessary to have look on the performance of the BJP led NDA govt from 2014-2018 period and to assess its chances. The National Democratic Alliance govt was formed in May 2014 after BJP led NDA coalition secured a total of 336 Lok Sabha seats. Out of the total seats, 282 were won by BJP and 54 by its allies. The 2014 general election redefined Indian politics.⁶ Since 1984, no party was able to achieve majority in parliament elections up to 2014. The BJP with a remarkable strike rate of two out of three seats in direct competition, with a vote share of 31.1% achieved a decisive victory. The average margin of victory in constituencies won by BJP was 17.9%.⁷ The BJP was able to expand its sphere of influence beyond the traditional Hindi speaking heartland. Earlier its political influence was mainly confined to Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, UP and Bihar.⁸ One must accept that emphatic victory of BJP was not only tectonic shift within Indian politics but also within the party itself because it was the same BJP that had won only two seats in 1984 general elections. Observers believe that Modi wave was the main cause of this landslide victory among many other causes. N. Modi's election campaign was superbly orchestrated. He hired the country's top copywriters, who gave him two simple but tellingly effective lines 'abki baar Modi Sarkar' and 'ache din aane wale hain'.⁹

² Times of India, Mar, 27, 2018

³ Jha Prashant, How BJP wins, inside India's greatest election machine, juggernaut books(edit 2017), p-211

⁴ Frontline, Apr, 13, 2018 p-32,33

⁵ Jha prashant, op-cit, p-211

⁶ ibid – p - 3

⁷ ibid –p-4

⁸ Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, India since independence, penguin books(edi,2008) p-270

⁹ Guha R.C, India after Gandhi, the history of world's largest democracy. Pan Macmillan India,(edi,2017),p-733

III. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE N MODI HEADED NDA GOVT.

It has now been almost four years since the Modi led NDA govt ascended the throne at New Delhi India has been undergoing horizontal and vertical transitions at domestic as well at international level. The Modi govt has achievements as well as failures to its credit. It is would not be exaggeration to say that Modi govt is one of the hard working govts in command at the centre now days. The huge number of development initiatives undertaken by the Modi govt has really turned Modi into 'Garibon ka Neta' thereby demolishing the characterization of the "soot boot ke sarkar" by the opposition party. However, it is worthwhile to point out here that all the developmental schemes undertaken have not been successful in realizing the underlined goals and a good number of them have been utter failures also. The run up to the 2014 general elections was a period of discontentment, apathy, indifference etc. against the UPA II govt. The electorate voted in favor Modi for change and realization of what Modi called "Ache- Din". The major achievements of Modi led NDA govt are as under: -

A) Swachh Bharat Abhyas: - The Swachh Bharat Abhyas is a cleanliness campaign launched on 2 Oct 2014 by Prime Minister N Modi by appealing celebrities of every region to lead it.¹⁰ The mission was started by N Modi who nominated nine famous personalities for the campaign and they took up the challenge of nominating nine more and so on and so forth. N Modi himself took a broom to the dirty riverside Ghats of the holy city of Varanasi.¹¹ It is held that Swachh Bharat Abhyas is the country's largest cleanliness drive so far involving 3 million govt employees, school and college students. It covers 4041 cities and towns. The campaign aims to accomplish the vision of clean India by 2 Oct, 2019 (Gandhi Jayanti).¹²

B) Speed of road /highway construction increased: - The N. Modi govt built 21km roads per day in 2016-17, though short of 41 km limit earlier set by the govt but the rate of construction is still twice as that of UPA II govt's rate of 6-9 km per day.¹³

C) Increase in tax collection: - The N Modi led NDA brought in demonetization policy on 8 Nov 2016. The demonetization policy was an effort to unearth black money, stop terror funding etc. by demonetizing Indian currency notes worth rupees 500 and 1000. It was claimed by the govt that in post demonetization period an increase in the number of tax payers has occurred by a figures of more than 90 lac.¹⁴ Through demonetization direct taxes have registered 12% growth rate and indirect taxes have grown at the rate of 25% as per the govt sources.

D) Make in India: -The Make in India programme was launched by govt on 25, Sept 2014. The aim of the programme was to make India as a global hub for manufacturing, design and innovation resembling China. It envisages to make India as an important investment destination by promoting entrepreneurship in the country. The Make in India scheme aims to forge cooperation between govt and industry by promoting congenial environment for investment. The main targets of Make in India programme are to increase manufacturing sector to 12-14% per annum, to create 100 million additional jobs by 2022 in manufacturing sector, increase from 16-25% of share of manufacturing sector in country's GDP, ensuring sustainability of growth etc. Under the Make in India initiative 20 sectors have been designated.

E) Smart cities Mission: - in order to develop cent percent potential citizen friendly and sustainable cities all over the country, the govt has launched the smart cities mission on 25 June 2015. The scheme which was to be implemented in collaboration with respective state govts with union ministry of urban development as nodal agency. The scheme is aimed at improvement of economic growth and quality of people's life by enabling local area development and harnessing technology. It is an urban retrofitting and renewal programme. The smart city would include adequate supply, assured electricity, sustainable environment, health and education, sanitation, public transport etc. Under this scheme prime minister sought to have 100 urban centers developed as hubs of innovation and creativity.¹⁵

F) Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna :- It was launched on 28 Aug 2014. It is the national mission of financial inclusion through accessibility of basic financial services like availability of saving bank account, remittance, credit, insurance,

10 India facts.org > three -years-of -Modi-govt- achievements- failures - road ahead accessed on 25th Apr 2018

11 Guha R.C op-cit p-739

12 current affairs ,made easy ESE 2018 preliminary exam ,p-27

13 India facts.org> three -years -of - modi- govt-achievements-failures- road ahead accessed on 25th Apr 2018

14 <https://www.India facts.org> three- years- of-modi- govt -achievements -failures- and- road- ahead> accessed on 25th Apr 2018

15 Guha R. C op-cit p-740

etc. The scheme features in the Guinness Book of World Records for opening 18096130 accounts in a single week.¹⁶ The scheme has special benefits in the form of interest on deposit, no minimum balance required, accidental insurance cover of rupees 1 lac, easy transfer of money throughout India etc.

G) Digital India: - The scheme was launched on 1 July 2015. It is an initiative by govt of India to ensure that govt services are made available to citizens electronically through improvement in online infrastructure.

H) Beti bachao beti padhao abhiyan:-The scheme was started by N Modi in Panipat district of Haryana on 22 Jan 2015 to generate awareness and to improve the efficiency of welfare services meant for women. It was a mission to promote gender equality through the education of girls.¹⁷ Under this scheme 100 districts were identified on the basis of low sex ratio as per the 2001 census. The action plan of the scheme aimed at promoting early registration of pregnancy and institutional delivery, create parliamentary forum for MP's representing these 100 districts.

I) Sankalp se siddhascheme: New India movement from 2017-22: - This is a new initiative launched by N Modi govt. for rebuilding India by bringing changes in the country's economy, society, citizens, governance, security and other in arenas. The scheme was launched on 75th anniversary of Quit India movement on 9 aug 2017 and has affirmed to make India as poverty free, clean India, casteism free India, corruption free India and terrorism free India.

J) Goods and service tax (GST): - The goods and service tax were rolled by N. Modi at the midnight of June 30, 2017 nationwide in presence of distinguished personalities in a special programme held in central hall of the parliament. The parliament passed 101st amendment act in constitution and added new articles 246A, 269A, 279A to the constitution. GST is a single indirect tax for the whole nation. It is a tax on supply of goods and services from manufacturer to consumer. It is an attempt to make India one unified market.

Besides the above discussed schemes there are many other schemes launched by the NDA govt that have made path breaking achievements towards realizing the goals of prosperity and development

IV. FAILURES OF N MODI LED NDA GOVT.

After reviewing performance of NDA govt, one must not be led by subjectivity in highlighting both the positive and negative dimensions. Even though NDA govt has launched an un-countable number of schemes but all of them have not been successful to the maximum extent. There are some grave and dim areas like foreign policy concerns, social unrest, unemployment, rising religious intolerance, farmers protests, S C & S T agitations etc. pending their solutions. The major failures of the current NDA govt are as under: -

A) Insufficient job creation: - Prime Minister N. Modi made tall promises in the run up to the 2014 general elections, pledging to create millions of jobs for the youth, provide clean and transparent governance and bring back the black money stashed away by politicians, businessmen and industrialists in foreign banks,¹⁸ But the NDA govt has not been able to deliver up to the satisfactory level. The promise of ten million jobs every year has proved to be a hollow slogan and in 2017, the job creation has been at the lowest rate in last 8 years. In 2015, the limitations of India's jobless growth model were starkly shown up when up when some 2.3 million young men applied for 368 junior posts advertised for by the Uttar Pradesh govt.¹⁹ As per the Financial Times newspaper report 25000 post graduates and 255 men with Doctorates applied for these menial posts.²⁰ Under the current NDA govt only 135000 jobs in 2015 and around 2 lac in 2016 have been generated.²¹ According to Indian employment report of 2016, the total unemployed club in India is 117 million. In the mood of the nation survey poll sponsored by India today magazine 58% believe that no jobs have been created and unemployment has worsened since Modi came to power in 2014.²² According to another survey conducted by centre for studies of developing societies (CSDS), voters thought unemployment is the biggest

¹⁶ current affairs, op-ct p-27

¹⁷ Guha R.C op-cit p-739

¹⁸ The Diplomat, Mar, 17, 2018

¹⁹ Guha R.C, op-cit p-741

²⁰ Financial Times, sept 20, 2015

²¹ india facts.org> three-years -of modi -govt -achievements -failures -and -road -ahead accessed on 25th apr 2018

²² India today, feb 5, 2018 p-45

problem today in the country²³. As per the international labour organization, the number of jobless persons in India is likely to increase over the next two years with no change in the employment rate.²⁴

B) Demonetizations, a flawed policy: - The policy of demonetization adopted on Nov 8 2016 had severe repercussions on Indian economy. The Indian economy which was growing nearly 7% per annum since 2014 began to show downward trend. The demonetization policy meant for unearthing the black money and stopping the terrorist funding backfired as many tax evaders managed to convert black money into white money in collaboration with bank officials, middleman etc.²⁵ No worthwhile effort has been made to book the offenders. According to India today magazine “terrorism and naxalism has not reduced after demonetization and according to the home ministry statistics cross border terrorism in j&k has gone up between Nov. 1 ,2016 – oct 31 2017.”²⁶ The demonetization caused a lot of inconvenience to the people and more than 100 persons lost their precious lives and the policy also resulted in short term inflation etc.

C) Agrarian distress: - The farmers community is highly distressed and unhappy with the Modi govt. The promises made by Modi of doubling farmers income, irrigation facilities, subsidies etc. have not been fulfilled. The much-hyped crop insurance scheme has only provided partial relief to farmers because of the failure of monsoons. According to the central govt figures some 12000 farmers commit suicide each year.²⁷ The farmers are reeling in extreme poverty due to the debt burden by demonetization and GST. According to Prof. Ashok Gulati of Indian Council for research and on international economic relations (ICRIER), it is not a secret anymore that farmers have suffered during the past three and half years of the Modi led govt, first because of two successive droughts and second from tumbling agricultural prices. According to Ashok Gulati and Shweta Saini, in the last four years the Indian economy (GDP) grew at an average rate of 7.2% but its agriculture sector (agri-GDP) grew at a mere 2.5% per annum, while in the last four years of the UPA II (2010-11 TO 2013-14), the economy clocked a growth rate of 7.1% per annum and the agri-GDP grew at 5.2% per annum.²⁸ The recent peasant protests in Maharashtra and other parts is vindictive of the fact. In the Lokniti-CSDS-ABP News mood of the nation survey Jan 25,2018 53% of the country’s farmers were of the view that N Modi govt has failed in addressing the farmer related problems.²⁹ It is found that 1/4th of the people think that Modi has failed in controlling prices and providing jobs. It seems that the Modi slogan of “bhut hua hai kissanu pe atyachaar, Ab ke bar Modi Sarkar” in run up to 2014 general elections has utterly failed in addressing the farmers concerns.

D) Growing religious intolerance: - India which had a distinction of being accommodative and inclusive country, has marched towards exclusion and intolerance. With the advent of Modi govt religious harmony has crumbled down like pack of cards. Day in and day out the religious intolerance issues crop up. The issues like Ghar vapsi, cow vigilantism, love jihad, ridiculous statements like ramzade versus haramzade etc. have made life difficult for religious minorities. The Indian religio-cultural ethos of amity and harmony has been subverted and indeed the very DNA of the of India’s social fabric has been re-engineered. There is shocking insensitivity and apathy being displayed towards the atrocities met to the Dalits and women. The unfortunate fact of the matter is that many a times the persons perpetuating such heinous actions are enjoying state patronage and no action is being initiated against the guilty. The hate speeches on the part of Sangh loyalists has become order of the day. According to India today report (Jan 8 2018) out of the total 60 gaurakshak attacks since 2010, 97% have happened during Modi’s rule and of the 25 persons who have died of such attacks 21 were Muslims.

E) Corruption and bank fraud cases: - One of the major setback for the Modi govt has been the recent bank fraud cases, one of the major public-sector banks has lost over 110 million rupees because of the fraud. The opposition has held Modi of helping the accused Nirav Modi and his uncle to escape India especially when the bank had alerted the CBI of

23 Frontline, Apr 13,2018 p-33

24 India Today Mar, 26 ,2018 p-70

25 The Diplomat ,Mar 17,2018

26 India Today, Jan 1, 2018 p-18

27 India Today , Jan 8,2018 p-68

28 Indian express, 11 jun,2018

29 Lokniti –CSDS-ABP News MOTN survey p-4

the fraud.³⁰ Moreover the inability of the Modi govt to bring the accused corrupt people of UPA II govt to book has brought into light the complacency of the govt to fulfill the run up promises of 2014 general elections.

F) GST implementation concerns: - Though Goods and Service Tax (GST) was believed to be a key reform for substantially simplifying the taxation structure in the country and to lower down the tax rates in general, but its implementation leaves much to be desired. There were many complaints regarding the classification of goods under various GST slabs and about the technical faults of GST portal.

G) Foreign policy failures: - N. Modi govt has also been subjected to heavy criticism in dealing with the foreign policy matters. Critics argue that Modi has not been able to act swiftly vis a vis Pakistan. The claim of much hyped surgical attack on terrorist training camps on Pak. soil did not digested in opposition camp. Similarly, Modi has not been able to stop the growing Chinese influence in South Asia especially through OBOR project. The string of perils strategy adopted by china has not been effectively dealt and still the element of indo centricity perception among the neighboring subcontinent countries continues and Modi has not been able to remove the doubts of India's big brotherly attitude in South Asia. Critics argue that frequent visits on the part of Prime Minister to abroad world has not yielded substantially.

V. CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS FOR BJP IN 2019 GENERAL ELECTIONS

With the Modi's "Ache Din" slogan virtually reaching towards its date of expiry, the political atmosphere of Indian democracy is experiencing fast and profound changes. The recent bye poll defeats of BJP in Bihar, UP, Rajasthan have been a cause of worry for BJP and even political analysts consider the defeats as warning shot against the BJP in general and Modi- Shah election power duo in particular. According to R C Guha BJP is today India's sole National party, with a major presence in majority of states and is to national politics what congress was once.³¹ Even though N Modi remains the forerunner for prime ministerial post in the upcoming general elections of 2019, notwithstanding that BJP has some real challenges lying before it which the party can't ignore at any cost. These issues will have a major impact on the outcome of 2019 general elections.

Firstly, the changing political equations within the states can pose a serious challenge to BJP in 2019 general elections. The changing political alignments can give BJP a run for money if materialized. The sudden and out of textbook support of BSP to Samaj wadi party (Akhilesh)- its archrival in the UP bye-elections resulting in the defeat of BJP is one point to be noted. The recent statement of K Chander Shaker Rao (Telangana Chief Minister) of forming a third front involving non-congress and non-BJP likeminded parties is also an important political equation that can cause worry in BJP camp. On 16 Apr 2018 the CPI(M) shedding its ideological rigidity declared itself open to electoral understanding with congress and other parties to keep BJP out. Speaking at the 22nd CPI(M) congress to the rank and file, to the country and particularly to our class enemies General Secretary Sitaram Yechury declared that the party has emerged united and is determined to put forward an alternative to keep BJP out.

Secondly even though BJP has managed to spread its electoral cartography in North East but the political coalition formed there (North Eastern Democratic Alliance) is expected to create new challenges for BJP in the region particularly while devising the electoral strategy for 2019 elections. How long can BJP witness the North Eastern Region where the subnational sentiments are very strong be kept insulated from the happenings taking place in rest of the country as the party has not touched the sensitive issues like cow protection and beef consumption there at all.³² The BJP would have to bargain very hard with these regional forces for seat distribution.

Thirdly another challenge for BJP is to sustain the support of marginalized sections who supported the party primarily because of the appeal of N Modi and the promise of representation. In 2014 elections BJP's vote share exceeded that of congress for every key social group, except Muslims. According to Aushotosh Varshney in 2014 general elections BJP won 24% of Dalit votes, 37.5% of S. T's and 33.6% of middle class votes as against congress's 18.5%, 28.3% and 15.1% for these categories respectively.³³ The party needs to transform its own character through its policies and to

³⁰ The Diplomat Mar 17, 2018

³¹ Guha R C, op- cit p-745

³² jha Prashant, op-cit p-222

³³ India's watershed vote, Hindu nationalism in power? In journal of democracy oct 2014, vol 25, number 4, Aushotosh Varshney

reflect the diverse nature of Indian polity. The party has to somehow reflect inclusiveness and take on board all the sections. On the contrary when the party has failed to do so it has lost the elections e.g Bihar state elections in 2015 when the RSS chief suggested that reservations must be reviewed and the same mistake was not repeated in UP elections in 2017 and the results were extremely worth cherishing for BJP. It would be again interesting to observe as to how and to what extent BJP's Dalit outreach succeeds in recovering the lost ground especially after the recent supreme court's modification of Dalit Atrocities Act. BJP will need to change its narrative of developmental agenda and convince the people that the party stands for inclusiveness.

Fourthly BJP has the challenge of carrying along with it the coalition partners and to ensure their support to the party. This becomes all the more important concern for BJP considering firstly, the past electoral statistics of 1967 general elections in which congress had won 283 Lok Sabha seats with 40% votes while BJP has won almost the same number of seats in 2014 general elections but only with 30.1% votes and secondly also because of the present efforts of opposition parties towards forming Mahagathbandan before 2019 general election. This factor has made BJP what one can call as "coalition dependent party". In order to withstand this challenge BJP will need to build some sort of Coalition Dharma to go through the 2019 general elections if the party is not able to reduce the above-mentioned difference of 10% vote share.

Fifthly another challenge facing BJP right now is, the essence of its Hindutva ideology is under erosion because the party is allowing defected candidates to enter into its own fold thereby compromising with its ideological purity that too when the BJP's political future course is closely linked with the Hindutva card navigation. It is challenging job to handle the party under such assimilation. This agenda of effecting defections and later on allowing space to the turncoats and discredited opposition leaders can backfire on the BJP especially at the grass root level. The latest example to quote in support of my argument is the Rajya Sabha by poll seat defeat in late 2017.

Sixthly another challenge before BJP would be to rebuild the deteriorating image. The BJP has the stigma of being unable to punish its guilty members accused in various cases of misbehavior. Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) which analyses data from election affidavits of MLA's and MP's, in a report published in 2017 mentioned that "BJP topped the list of lawmakers accused of rape (14 in number)."³⁴ The indifference on the part of party top brass leadership to punish such arrogant members puts serious question marks on the credibility of the party and irony of the fact is that such number of episodes is increasing day by day against BJP members.

Seventhly the anti incumbency factor against the BJP govts in states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Haryana, Jharkhand etc. where BJP had secured heavily in 2014 elections is also a matter of concern for the ruling party because it is found that electorate votes against ruling party because of its dissatisfied performance despite opposition being weak. There is an undeniable erosion of BJP support in these states. The state level anti-incumbency factors have negative effects on the national politics because parliamentary candidates of a given state's ruling party enjoy an electoral advantage in national elections often when the elections are held early in the incumbent state govt's term and not when the incumbent govt's term ends. The same disenchantment has been voiced by civil society groups in the form of protest letters, processions, renunciation of awards etc. The Lokniti CSDS –mood of the nation survey has also cautioned about the decline of BJP in these states.³⁵

Eighthly, another variable for BJP would be to find an alternative to total dependence on N Modi and Shah duo heroics to deliver. The party has become totally dependent on Modi –Shah combination and such a scenario is not healthy for a party. Can Modi's ideas and Shah's management command greater penetration than opposition leaders again in 2019 remains to be seen. In 2014 general elections crowds flocked to hear N Modi everywhere and tens of millions of voters watched him on TV and were impressed with his speeches and his evident zest and energy.³⁶ Modi proved to be a real poll mascot for BJP. Surveys show that every fourth voter for the BJP voted not for the party, but for Modi.³⁷ This one-man army show of Modi assisted by Shah needs to be changed in the light of unpredictable nature of Indian electorate.

³⁴ Frontline , May11,2018

³⁵ Lokniti ,CSDS, op-cit p-3

³⁶ Guha R .C. op- cit, p- 733

³⁷ Pradeep Chibber and Rahul Verma, in their article "it is Modi,not BJP that won this election," The Hindu, june 1, 2014

Ninthly, voter mobilization is next important challenge before BJP in 2019. In 2019 1.38 crore voters will play a key role in determining the electoral arithmetic's. In 2014 general elections a key source for BJP strength came from young voters especially the first timers. Along with voter mobilization challenge BJP will also face the voter sustenance challenge as revealed by the Lokniti- ABP News Mood of the nation survey, in which UPA has gained more percentage points among higher caste votes and the young voters (18-35years) seem much less enthused with the party than they were back in May 2017.³⁸

VI. CONCLUSION

With every passing moment, the politics in India is moving very fast towards the mother of all battles in electoral democracy. The run up period upto the 2019 general elections is very important phase as far as the electoral outcome is concerned. After reviewing the performance of the incumbent N Modi led NDA govt from 2014-18, the prospects of BJP coming to power seem to have got a bit reduced, but still the party holds clear and visible lead over its rivals. Neither one can blindly accept the view that 2019 would be another 2004 for BJP nor that 2019 would be a cakewalk for BJP, the narrative may change many a times between now and then. The ruling party faces challenges of multiple nature as discussed earlier while the opposition parties are also the victim of crises in their own ways. Recently at the completion of four years tenure in a video presentation by BJP, the govt came out with a new slogan "saaf niyat, sahi vikas, 2019 mein phir ek baar Modi sarkar". The BJP has released a number of small videos on social networking sites with the above-mentioned slogan to influence the voters. In order to win the mandate of the people BJP will have to focus more on practice than the rhetoric and red herring especially when the opposition parties have realized that BJP is defeat able. Victories on social media can be translated into seats only if the party has boots on ground and continuous rapport with the actual voters. Most of the veteran psychologists and political pundits believe that the fate of 2019 general elections would be determined by the tussle between the index of opposition unity (IOU) versus index of opposition disunity (IOD). Considering the ongoing attempts by the different opposition parties at forging common political front against BJP, the party would require to change what P Chakravarty called 90 percent of 60 percent plan of 2014, (under which NDA won 90% of its seats in states comprising 60% of total Lok Sabha strength) into an all India plan. Modi personally has to struck balance against the charge of soot boot ke Sarkar leveled by the opposition while initiating pro-business policies versus vote bank politics when pro poor measures are taken by him. In 2019 general elections BJP will have to fear regional parties more than Indian National congress because of late it has been observed during the recent byelections that INC is willing to take back seat so as to deny BJP the second consecutive inning. The recent by-election defeats met to BJP at the hands of various pre-poll coalitions in different states has triggered a series of speculations on the part of political commentators on the outcome of 2019 results. The opposition parties believe that these by-poll defeats are merely precursors and the voter dissatisfaction with the BJP both at the centre and state level is gaining increasing velocity. On the positive side of it, these by-poll defeats can result in reverse consolidation because Modi still remains the front runner for 2019 elections. Furthermore, one must agree with the view of political scientists Gilles Vernier's and Raj Kamal Singh who argue that bypolls work rarely as barometer of upcoming Assembly or Lok Sabha elections. As already held that narrative may change in the coming months but still these defeats will make BJP to think upon and act squarely and objectively without taking recourse to devious logic and lame excuses. In 2019 general elections, for BJP much would depend upon how the party will play "Vikas Card" and earnestly would address the challenges as discussed earlier. BJP has at present no room for complacency, because the party has precedence of 2003 electoral debacle before itself when nobody was writing off the second term for Vajpayee but congress emerged as victorious. BJP will have to remain cautious and vigilant because politics is never static and circumstances can change overnight. No one can absolutely predict on when, how and for what reasons changes will occur- but they do occur and will continue occurring in Indian democracy.

³⁸ Lokniti CSDS, op-cit p- 4