# THIRD CONCEPT

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E-mail: third.concept @rediffmail.com

Website: www.thirdconceptjournal.com

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# **Editorial**

### The Please-all Verdicts

Please-all verdicts have been delivered by the masses in the recently-held elections to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), and state assemblies of Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, and by-elections to state assemblies in UP, Bihar, Odisha, and Rajasthan along with bye-elections to the Mainpuri Lok Sabha seat in UP. Aam Adami Party (AAP) managed to win elections to the MCD while Congress won assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh and the BJP was swept to power in Gujarat for the seventh time consecutively. Nevertheless, in the state assembly bye-elections, the BJP has managed to win one assembly seat in Bihar and one seat in UP while Samajwadi Party has won the Mainpuri Lok Sabha seat by an impressive margin and the RLD, an ally of the SP, wrested an assembly seat in UP from the BJP whereas BJD has won state bye-election in Odisha.

In the elections to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on December 4, AAP secured 134 seats in a house of 250 with BJP winning 104 seats and Congress securing 9 seats along with 3 others. The voting percentage of AAP stands at 42.05%, for the BJP it is 39.09% and for Congress, it is 11.68%. Relative to the last polls held for the MCD, AAP had recorded a big jump in its vote share whereas both the BJP and Congress had registered a decline in their respective vote share. After having won a landslide victory in Punjab and staging a good show in the recently-held Gujarat assembly election along with electoral victory in the Delhi MCD, AAP has qualified to be declared as a national political party.

The electoral outcome in Himachal Pradesh has enabled Congress to secure 40 seats in a house of 68, with the BJP winning 25 seats and AAP failing to open its account and others mostly comprising independents securing 3 seats. Many experts opine that Himachal Pradesh for the past some decades has followed a tradition of change of regime after every five years and the recent verdict of assembly elections favouring Congress at the helm and ousting the BJP out of power is in consonance with that tradition. Undoubtedly, the BJP was very hopeful of retaining power in the state in defiance of the so-called tradition and it also pulled all stops to retain the power with the help of a horde of senior BJP leaders and Central Ministers engaged in electioneering for the party. Having won elections and formed a government of its own in Himachal Pradesh, Congress is called upon to deliver on its promises.

Undoubtedly, the verdict handed out by the electorate of Gujarat is unique and admirable in many respects and its uniqueness lies in enabling the BJP to retain power for the seventh consecutive term with a landslide victory with unprecedented 156 seats in a house of 182 along with an over 52% of votes polled. Congress could manage to save its grace by securing 17 seats relative to the 77 seats won by it in 2017. AAP was able to secure 5 seats and a share of over 10% of votes and it has entitled to claim the status of a national party.

Many experts have contended that the please-all verdicts in the recently-held assembly elections and some bye-elections entail different prospects and lessons for the main contending parties – AAP, the BJP, and Congress – with AAP becoming more enthusiastic to expand its sphere of political activity in states where Congress and the BJP are the major contenders for power and trying to replace Congress in Opposition space gradually. Undoubtedly, the unprecedented success of the BJP in Gujarat bolstered the morale of the BJP; nonetheless, its Gujarat electoral model based on divisive politics is fraught with long-term sociopolitical implications.

Admittedly, Congress has managed to form its government in Himachal Pradesh; nevertheless, it is called upon to deliver on its promises in Himachal Pradesh without brooking any delay, and concomitantly, it needs to seriously ponder over its electoral strategy, organizational strength, and an alternative programme in response to BJP's policy of hatred and communal divide. Congress needs to galvanise its village-level, district-level, and provincial-level units by establishing a close rapport with the masses to be able to prove itself as a rallying point for Opposition unity.

——BK