

Elections : Basic Issues Sidelined

As the people are going to polls in five states in a week, the election campaign reached to a feverish pitch. In Telangana, the grand alliance of Congress and TRS competed in taking the campaign to lowest levels. The leaders from both sides, including the Chief Minister are prolifically using unparliamentary and abusive language.

The BJP campaigners are leaving no occasion to charge the political atmosphere with communal ranting. While preparations are going on to celebrate birth centenary of Joseph Kurien, the founder milk producers cooperatives in India, BJP's MP Dileep Sanghania accused him of donating funds from Amul for conversions of tribals to Christianity knowing full well that Kurien was an atheist.

Communal rantings were not the monopoly of BJP. During the election campaign in Rajasthan, former union minister C P Joshi and Congress leader proclaimed that 'Umabhartis and Narendra Modis are not qualified to talk about Hinduism because they are not Brahmins.' "If anyone knows about Hindu religion, it is the Brahmin pundits", he stated in the rally.

In a bid to counter BJP's dynasty allegation against Nehru family, Vilas Muttamwar, who once held shipping portfolio, cast objectionable aspersions on Modi's family. He said "everyone knew five generations of Rahul Gandhi. But this Narendra, nobody knows his father's name".

In Maharashtra which is not going to polls, the state government headed by BJP took the elections in neighbouring states as an opportune time to announce the recognition of Marathas as backward caste to provide for 16 per cent reservation in education and jobs.

There are many Joshis, Sanghanias and Muttamwars who are trying to mobilize votes using religion and caste. If these comments proved anything, it is the ideological bankruptcy and political cowardice of both the parties.

It is also an attempt to divert the peoples' attention from their miserable failure in solving the basic issues faced by the people.

One major such issue is growing agricultural crisis. Thousands of farmers across the country reached Delhi and participated in a day-long protest demanding a special session of Parliament to discuss agrarian crisis among others.

Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are predominantly agrarian states. The crisis is pushing many peasants to commit suicides. Anger and frustration among farmers has erupted as protests and demonstrations in the last two years in these states. Even then the governments tried to assuage them with palliatives like loan waivers, crop insurance and promise to raise minimum support price. But they never tried to address the underlying causes for the agrarian crisis.

During their march to Delhi many peasants recalled their experiences. A farmer from Bikaner laughed when asked about recent announcement on the government promising to purchase Bajra, urad and moong at increased MSP. "Bajra is selling between Rs,1100 to 1200 per quintal when MSP is Rs.1900. similar is the case for urad and moong". He said.

Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje grandiosely announced waiver of co-operative bank loans up to Rs.50,000 and procurement of rabi crop. The farmers said a small percentage of them got their loans waived off and purchases at MSP were negligible.

Small and medium farmers are not aware of prime minister's crop insurance scheme. Even the big farmers say the insurance companies are denying payment even though the crops were completely damaged. "The government is benefiting the private insurance companies in the name of crop insurance", they echoed in unison.

Typically, these palliative measures are not reaching the peasants who are in dire need of it as only 15 per cent of them have access to the institutional loans and had to depend upon the private money lenders. Same is the case with MSP. By the time the state procurement agencies start their operations, the harvest season coming to its end and the peasants are left to sell their produce at depressed rates. These schemes are mainly benefiting the landlord sections and augmenting their financial strength.

The political leaders often talk about the young India or millennial generation as the strength of the country. Yet they failed to generate the employment opportunities for the youth and their creative labour is getting wasted. The ruling classes are using caste based reservation to divide and divert the youth. On one side, the ruling parties are encouraging the demands for inclusion of one caste or other in reservation category while at the same time privatising the education thus reducing the job in the government sector to a miniscule.

As the Central Committee called upon the people in the statement on elections:

“The successive governments in these states have been implementing fascist type of repression. For BJP and its mentor RSS Hindutwa has become a pet slogan to push through the divide and rule policy by raking up communal, caste and regional hatreds among the people. They are attempting to lull the anger of people with palliative measures. But they are committed to protect and continue the present socio-economic and political system.

The backwardness of the Indian economy and consequent poverty and misery of people are the result of continuing semi-feudal and semi-colonial nature of our society. Unless and until this system is changed to establish a democratic society, there would not be any development in the lives of the people. We call upon the people to unite and struggle against the continuing oppression of semi-feudal relations and the exploitation and domination of imperialism.”
