

Failure of the Opposition is not Failure of the Alternative

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About 15 days ago, I told a senior journalist friend that there are not even 2 months left for the Lok Sabha elections, Rahul Gandhi is roaming around on a delectation (*tafreeh*). The friend probably found my comment exasperating and replied that he is not on a delectation trip. The conversation between us on this topic ended there. However, I wanted to ask that if he is not on a delectation trip, then is Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra a serious effort towards changing the government in the Lok Sabha 2024 elections? Or is there a long-term effort to change the distorted narrative of Indian politics, looking beyond the immediate thing like elections? It would be better if the intellectuals who accolade Rahul Gandhi on this trip shed light on this pertinent question. As an ordinary citizen and political worker, I find this yatra of Rahul Gandhi completely devoid of above mentioned goals.

The 'Congress-led' prefix has been attached to the INDIA alliance of opposition parties since the day of its formation. Therefore, it was the duty of Congress to make the alliance prepared in the best war for the elections with full responsibility and honesty. But Congress did not follow the coalition dharma in the recently concluded assembly elections of five states. It is not just a matter of loss in elections, if allies were also included in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram assembly elections, it would have sent an effective message at the all India level. A momentum would have been created, which would have gradually gained further momentum till the Lok Sabha elections.

Congress did not show any seriousness about the alliance even after the assembly elections. What should have happened was that a series of joint rallies should have been started across the country by taking together farmers' organizations, labour organizations and student organizations. Common posters, pamphlets, banners etc. of the alliance's programs in all Indian languages were put up across the country. This would have created unity among the workers of the parties involved in the alliance, and instilled confidence among the voters in having a strong alternative against the BJP-led NDA in the Lok Sabha elections.

But, strangely, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi started Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra after the assembly elections. As if the 2024 Lok Sabha elections are not a big challenge for Congress. In other words, the deepest crisis yet on constitutional values, democratic institutions and civil rights should not be a matter of real concern for Congress. The yatra also included those states where the parties involved in the alliance against BJP are strong. As if Congress alone has the strength for an extensive conquest in the elections throughout the country. It is interesting that many progressive intellectuals and civil society activists accolade this eccentric notion of Congress.

This came as a golden opportunity, provided by Congress and the entire opposition for Narendra Modi who was facing rivals within his party and anti-incumbency factor. As the Prime Minister, he has many opportunities and platforms available to him every day in the country and abroad to attack Congress and the INDIA alliance. He took full advantage of the opportunity. Using governmental power, he shattered the alliance and gave the message that he is winning the Lok Sabha elections in 2024 by getting more seats than in 2019.

Narendra Modi is the biggest player in the politics of corporate-communal nexus going on in the country. He knows very well when to use whom on the path of politics of corporate-communal nexus, and when to throw away whom after use. He has further paved this path by awarding Bharat Ratna to the deceased leaders. It would be needless to say that the sudden shower of Bharat Ratna awards is not a show of respect for the recipients, but an election trick.

It is Modi's 'quality' that he does not hesitate even a bit while moving on his path. Even awarding the Bharat Ratna to a personality with the sole intention of winning elections may result in devaluation of the country's highest civilian award, or contempt of deceased leaders. Karpoori Thakur and Chaudhary Charan Singh cannot come to tell the people that they could not even think of being accomplices in the politics of corporate-communal nexus. But Modi does not care about all these things.

Most of the opposition leaders are involved in the race to send thanks and welcome messages on the conferment of Bharat Ratna to Karpoori Thakur, Chaudhary Charan Singh and PV Narasimha Rao by the government. Market economy is once again being eulogised in the entire media while referring to Narasimha Rao. The Ram temple of Ayodhya is being described as a symbol of renaissance on the pretext of LK Advani. As if everything has gone right in the

last 10 years; 'Ram Rajya' has been established, where the country is run through markets and temples!

One may look further at the 'glory' of the Bharat Ratna that Karpoori Thakur's son has once again joined NDA; Chaudhary Charan Singh's grandson has turned like a penny (*chavanni*) and has joined the NDA; Narasimha Rao's daughter is thankful to the Prime Minister for bringing her father out of obscurity. These people who claim to be heirs are so small that they are trading their ancestors to get a piece of the bones of power. Looking at the award giver and the heirs, one doubts whether these leaders, honoured with the country's highest award, had really done anything significant for the country and society?

Modi has confidently announced that "big" work will now be done in his third term as Prime Minister. While our eminent intellectuals are busy in sending suggestions and best wishes to Rahul Gandhi, the yatri, to set a new narrative! As if the narrative of the country's politics will really change without changing the neo-liberal policies and total rejection of communalism! In such a situation, it is hard to know whether these gentlemen are deceiving people who look to them with a hope or being deceived in themselves?

Modi continues to maintain his strong hold on power by keeping Congress and Rahul Gandhi as his main opposition. This has been his well-thought-out strategy since the preparation for the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. And Congress is reciprocating with the strong aim of Rahul Gandhi's claim to power after Modi. Rahul Gandhi is 'Prime Minister in waiting' until he gets the post of Prime Minister in near or distant future. This gives solace not only to the courtiers of the Congress but also to the intellectuals – 'There will be spring again, flowers will bloom in these branches again' - institutions/posts/awards/grants will all be returned to us again! It is a matter of regret that in such circumstances no one's credibility can survive in the eyes of the public. Nor can new credibility be created.

I saw an interview of Rakesh Tikait done by Sanket Upadhyaya on the occasion of Bharat Ratna award to Chaudhary Charan Singh. Sanket Upadhyaya is an expert in talking serious with pleasantness and ease. Rakesh Tikait welcomed the award of Bharat Ratna to Chaudhary Charan Singh, but with many ifs and buts. He cautioned against the government's move to buy farmers' land for builders by not paying Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops under the dictate of capitalists, and said that a strong farmers' agitation is inevitable in the coming days.

It can be remembered that the unprecedented farmers' movement against three agricultural laws could not be used in the right political direction. That is, the energy of the movement that arose against the politics of corporate-communal nexus got wasted by being consumed by the same politics. There was no clarity on politics in Rakesh Tikait's interview. If the future agitations do not provide guidelines for an alternative politics against the politics of the corporate-communal nexus, then politics cannot be saved from the capture of the 'gang of capitalists', as Tikait used the same term.

It can also be remembered that Kishan Patnaik, pondering upon Mahendra Singh Tikait's farmers' agitation seriously, had released a booklet titled 'Tikait Ki Kitab' (Tikait's Book). That was a little shocking for youngsters like us. In 1991, Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Prime Minister Narasimha Rao opened India's economy to market forces, saying that there is no alternative (TINA). In the same context, Kishan Patnaik had put forward the thoughtful idea - 'the world is not without alternative' – *vikalpheen nahin hai duniya*. We could not understand at that time why he wrote 'Tikait Ki Kitab'? Now we understand the whole issue.

The politics of the corporate-communal nexus moves forward creating new sensations every moment. So that the society remains a victim of oblivion towards the idea and possibility of alternatives. It is the role of the intellectual class to prevent this from happening. If the established intellectual class is not able to do this, then new intellectuals will come forward.

Society is an organic set up. The status quo does not last forever. New ideas and efforts are born. If a revolutionary idea/ideology becomes a supporter of the status quo, then new reviews/interpretations of that very idea/ideology also arise. It is to be hoped that the failure of the political opposition to the corporate-communal nexus will not be a failure of the alternative politics and ideology.

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