

The Anti-Congress Narrative: Identifying Truth and Falsehood!

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(This article was published in the first week of May 2019. At that time, the Narendra Modi government had completed its five years term, and the process of Lok Sabha elections 2019 was going on. Riding successfully on the corporate-communal nexus, Narendra Modi has won the 2024 elections after 2019. But, this has to be said with extreme disappointment that the political opposition, most intellectuals and most of the media even today seem to be playing on the Modi-pitch of corporate-communal nexus. No one seems ready to give even a needle point of space to any idea/discourse/analysis about emancipation from this disastrous nexus. Even the Congress is not driven by a genuine will to claim the legacy of its freedom struggle and constitutional values. In such a hostile environment, this 6-year-old article has been released again as it is for potential new readers. In the hope that the idea of emancipation may at least find a place to stand somewhere.)

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Narendra Modi, during the campaigning for 2014 Lok Sabha elections, had specifically emphasized two things: First, nothing has happened in the country during the Congress rule of the last 65 years. He, accusing the Congress of failures during its 65 years rule, had then claimed that he would complete 65 years of tasks in just 65 days if he is given power. Second, he will bring the black money, deposited in foreign countries, back to the country and deposit 15 lakhs in each Indian's account. The promise of depositing 15 lakh rupees in each Indian's account has been declared as an election *jumla* by BJP President Amit Shah himself. Modi and his blind supporters have constructed a long narrative about the failure of 65 years of Congress rule. These Modi supporters are not limited to the members of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) only. They are spread all over the country and abroad in large numbers. From the last election campaign to the current one, Modi has converted every opportunity, related to any subject, into an opportunity to oppose and criticise the Congress. Freedom fighter and India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru has been labelled a 'villain' of this narrative. Modi has assigned the role of the 'hero' to himself.

At the beginning of this narrative, it was the intention of Modi supporters to convey the impression that the country got real freedom when Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India. This message has deep implications, the primary one being that the Congress did not fight for the independence of the country and that it has been a burden upon the country. Therefore, India should be made Congress-free. The actors and supporters of the anti-corruption movement also expressed the impression that Congress is heading towards its end in the political spectrum of India. The implication behind this assumption was also that the time has come to discard the struggle, the values, the ideals and the ideology of the Independence Movement. Though the Congress itself had got rid of the true spirit of the Independence Movement long ago, but Modi's people were not prepared to tolerate even the hollow structure of the Congress. Anyway, under this new narrative, allegations were heaped upon the Congress for all the ills confronting the country, starting from Kashmir issue to the problem of unemployment. On the other hand, those who raise their voice about the wrong policies and decisions of the present government are snubbed by the Modi supporters with the retort 'where were they during the Congress rule'? Modi and his cabinet colleagues have not only made unrestrained statements against the Constitution, but also have made false and misleading statements about various statistics/data related to the economy, including employment. Modi and his supporters promptly heap blame on the Congress rule for the failures of even the present government, and award certificates of excellence to Modi and themselves. If someone questions Modi and his government about the specific problems which surfaced after 2014 or reminds them about Modi's promises of great change within 65 days of coming to power, then under this grand narrative, that person is declared to be a traitor. The anti-Congress narrative constructed in the last five years by Modi and his supporters has remained an effective strategy despite all the anti-Constitution and anti-people policies, falsehoods and lies of the Modi government.

Before this narrative was constructed by Modi and his supporters, the BJP, as a political party, had never mentioned the opinion that no development took place in the country in the last 65 years. Initially Jana Sangh and later the BJP's top leaders have praised the leaders of the Congress, from Nehru to Rajiv Gandhi. Nehru's admirer, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, expressed his respect for Indira Gandhi for her strong will power by calling her *Durga*. The BJP's paternal organisation RSS too had never questioned the alleged no-progress role of the Congress. It is an open truth that the RSS has been nurtured more in the care of the Congress than by the Jan Sangh/BJP. From time to time, it has in its turn repaid the debt by supporting Congress in the elections.

It is factually wrong to say that only the Congress ruled the country before 2014. There was a BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the Center for 6 years under the leadership of AB Vajpayee at the juncture of 20th and 21st Century. Even before that there were non-Congress governments at the Center and states. In fact, in a multi-party parliamentary democracy and a federal system the rule of a single party cannot be blamed for all the failures even if it had ruled the country for a long time. Achievements and shortcomings are shared in a multi-party parliamentary democracy. If the Congress was a total failure and was harming the country, as Modi repeatedly says, then its equal responsibility lies upon the political parties and their leaders active during that period because they failed to put pressure on the government for the right policies or in failing to overthrow it in elections. If it is assumed that nothing happened during the Congress rule, or all went wrong during its time then it is a sign of a collective national failure. The RSS, which has been engaged in the work of 'nation-building' since its establishment, will also be viewed as a party in that grand failure.

Counting the achievements of the democratic India after Independence will make a long list. Apart from the constitutional and democratic institutions, which have been enormously damaged by the Modi government, various institutions related to education, research, literature, arts, science, commerce etc. were erected on a large-scale. Simultaneously diplomatic, business and cultural relations were established with the whole world. A large body of public sector undertakings was erected for the production of essential materials and apparatus required for the modern development of the country. A central network of railways and network

of bus services under the road transport system in each state was expanded for travel. Efforts were made to develop facilities for irrigation, seeds, manure, modern equipment and techniques to help agriculture. Schools, colleges and universities were built on a large scale along with stadiums and sports complexes. Medical colleges, hospitals and technology institutes were established. The three components of the Indian Army were strengthened and expanded...

Therefore to examine the truth of the current anti-Congress narrative, let's delineate two situations for comparison. First, Delhi is the capital city of the country. There is lack of civic facilities for three-fourths of the population, it is full of densely populated slums, small children are involved in various types of dangerous occupations, they beg on traffic lights throughout the city by performing entertaining acts, in the recent past, three sisters (Manasi, 8 years, Shikha 4 years, Paro 2 years) died of hunger in East Delhi ... About this reality or other similar anxieties, Modi and his supporters would retort without any qualm that all this is basically due to the 65 years of Congress rule. Now look at the second situation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spends billions of rupees on his image building exercises ranging from his dresses to advertisements and foreign tours to public meetings. If nothing had happened in Congress rule, then where did Modi bring this wealth from? In other words, if the Congress rule is responsible for the first situation, the second situation in which PM Modi functions is also a gift of the Congress rule. Indeed, Modi and his supporters are pushing forward the work of Congress i.e. neoliberalism. Dr. Manmohan Singh, being an economist of very high caliber, rendered his services to the corporate in a classical manner. Modi provided that service by playing blind. The country and the world have seen the glimpses of this in Modi's 'New India' and his experiments such as demonetization.

In view of the above facts one can say that the narrative of failure of the Congress rule constructed by Modi and his supporters is based on lies that support a strategy. It can be said that the ventures during Congress rule were inadequate. It can also be argued that the endeavours were undertaken with wrong policies and perspectives. But to say or believe that there has been no enterprise in the last 65 years, is nothing but a lie and a calculated misinformation. There is a saying in India that a lie does not walk on its feet. But this invention of Modi and his supporters has been going on for five years with strong foot prints. It is time for a serious investigation into this phenomenon.

This article makes an attempt to understand and to analyse this issue in the context of the dynamics of neoliberalism. However, there can be other contexts also. When a system finds its firm groundings, it develops its own dynamics for survival and further strength. It can lead to a protest movement from within its own structure in order to save itself from a real challenge, placed by its genuine opponents, in which different voices with different beliefs can join hands on one platform in its support. The anti-corruption movement, held under the aegis of 'India Against Corruption' (IAC) was born from the womb of neo-liberalism in order to defend itself and to get more strength for the next phase. Several wise people were involved in it. They all got together by raising the slogan - 'Modi in the center and Kejriwal in Delhi'. With this same movement, the new incarnation of the RSS/BJP was created and Modi became Prime Minister of the country with an absolute majority. This way neoliberalism relentlessly entered the next phase in the county by using the combined strength of its veiled and open supporters. There is no logic in opposing corruption if one supports neo-liberal system because within it corruption is inbuilt. The players and supporters of the anti-corruption movement did not allow this question to be raised because their interests are linked to the neo-liberal system. This is how the dynamics of neo-liberalism operate in collaboration with the ruling class of India. It is not without reason that people involved in that movement have not expressed regret about their role till date. Rather, most leftists and liberals are playing the role of the *bearers* of Kejriwal's palanquin!

Just as the players of the anti-corruption movement were the same people who had gained strength in the neo-liberal period of the past two decades, the opponents of the Congress rule today include the very people who enjoyed their empowered status in the 65 years of Congress rule. Let us try to understand this fact by going back to the 50s and 90s. The New Economic Policies, introduced in 1991, benefited mostly those who at some point in time had already achieved good education and employment provided by the government after independence. Education in the public sector was inexpensive and facilities like housing, medical, children's education, pension etc. were attached with all categories - lowest to highest - of employment. This is beside the other perks, both legal and illegal. With the introduction of New Economic Policies, this section of Indian society got newer wings to fly higher. Their houses had already been

built with cheap land rates and loans provided by the government. Tours abroad had been undertaken on government expenditure. Each department had its own trade unions which used to fight to get maximum facilities for the employees. The high rank officers had built guest houses and clubs for their stay and entertainment all over the country. Their children had settled abroad after getting medical and engineering education from government institutions.

The sixth and seventh pay commissions made them financially stronger, thanks to the New Economic Policies. The new generation of children benefited by purchasing expensive private education and being appointed in the multinational companies spread out in metropolitan cities of India and Europe-American countries. Their houses, built earlier under government schemes, commanded values in crores of rupees. They started next by making commercial use of their houses in a variety of ways. People dismantled their old houses in order to build four floors with lift, parking space and basement through builders who used to get one floor to sell in exchange. The owners sometimes sold two floors, and sometimes the basement to purchase luxurious farm houses, cars and showrooms. Many luxury villas, hotels, motels, banquet halls, multi-storey residential buildings, commercial complexes, malls, airports, private schools/colleges/universities etc. propped up around metropolitan cities/cities for their benefit. All the consumer items, including foreign liquor, was made available and was at their disposal. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, impoverished women from Eastern Europe and Central Asian countries started coming to the metropolitan cities of India for prostitution.

These people, who had taken the maximum advantage of both the stages of Congress rule, now say in the highest voice that nothing has happened in the last 65 years. In fact, they want to keep their possessions, the investments, the entire margin profit from the loot of resources and labour, only for their own progeny. These people are the country's opinion makers. They manufacture consensus in favor of neoliberalism. They, under Modi's leadership, have successfully conveyed the message of 'nothing has happened in the last 65 years' to the lowest strata of masses. As a result the hard-working masses, who suffered the most by the effects of neo-liberal policies in the last thirty years, also begin to repeat that nothing has happened in the last 65 years. Without realising the truth, they say this for the beneficiaries of the Congress Raj, via neoliberalism. They have come to believe that if the big people will get their due In Modi Raj, then it is possible

that they too will get a chance at some point! After all '*Modi hai to mumkin hai*' (All is possible if Modi is there).

Like the anti-corruption movement, Modi-wave has given a strong base to neo-liberalism once again. What could be a bigger achievement for neo-liberalism now that its victims themselves have been taught to believe that nothing happened in the last 65 years - even for the people who own *kothis* and cars?

It is high time for those, who often talk about *Bahujan* to bloody revolution, to notice this immense strength of the counter-revolution. If there still remain some forces in the country which have not fallen completely into the trap of political illiteracy they should come together to fight this devious trap with an alternative vision.

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