

BJP RISING TO POWER AGAIN?

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BJP is preparing to assume reigns of power again at the Centre. It has assumed as if it will come to power and Mr. L.KAdvani will be the Prime Minister of India. The success in the southern state of Karnataka has tremendously boosted its morale. Though BJP knows it cannot come to power of its own, it is preparing for striking alliances both in north as well as in south. In south it may try to woo TDP again.

How TDP would respond one cannot be sure. But one can be sure for one thing. If TDP makes mistake of allying with the BJP it may have to pay heavy price in terms of Muslim votes. TDP lost last election in Andhra Pradesh because of its alliance with BJP at the Centre. That is why it severed its relation with BJP after its defeat. It is therefore, TDP leadership will think twice before supporting BJP government even from outside. At least there may not be any pre-election alliance.

In Tamil Nadu AIDMK might support BJP as Jayalalitha is pre-disposed towards Hindutva ideology, herself being Brahmin and inclined towards the Hindu right. But to some extent she also depends on Muslim vote. Not only Muslim vote but she had to pay price in terms of Christian votes also when she passed anti-conversion law and lost election. Subsequently she withdrew the bill. However, one can hardly predict what decision Jayalalitha would take.

In the north U.P. and Bihar are large states which send more than 125 M.P.s to Parliament. In U.P. Mayawati seems to be going strong and she is striving all her nerves to keep her alliance with upper caste Hindus alive. Also, unlike in 1989 and 1999 Hindutva issues have lost their shine. To raise Hindutva issues is like whipping the dead horse. And Brahmins have been disillusioned with the BJP anyway and Mayawati is prepared to share power with them.

Mulayamsingh is likely to go with the Congress, if some newspaper reports are true. Thus U.P. may not pay rich dividends to BJP much that it tries. The position of the Congress is no better in U.P. though Congress is trying to woo dalits through Rahul Gandhi. it may pay some dividends in Amethi constituency but certainly not all over U.P. The electoral equations do not favour it.

In Bihar things are quite different again. But there Nitish Kumar seems to be in command and BJP at best is a junior partner. The way Nitish is handling the Bhagalpur riots issue, he is improving his image among Muslims. He got guilty of Bhagalpur riots punished and also offered some compensation to them. The Central Government has also declared compensation package for Bhagalpur riot victims and Nitish was shrewd enough not to let Laluprasad Yadav run away with the credit.

The BJP may win some seats from Bihar in general elections but only as a junior partner of JDU. Nitish Kumar may not jeopardize his Muslims base which he is trying to build by letting BJP emerge as a force in Bihar. It seems he will play his card shrewdly in order to survive in Bihar. If he lets BJP emerge as a major force Muslims are likely to switch over to Laluprasad once again. BJP thus may not improve much over its last elections tally.

In M.P. and Rajasthan situation is not so certain. There certainly will be anti-incumbency factor because of BJP's failure on many front. Gujjar agitation will eat into BJP's votes as more than 40 Gujjars have been killed and yet BJP is not prepared to concede Scheduled Tribe status to them. It is trying to throw ball into Centre's court. Besides Gujjar front there are failures on other fronts too. Christians have been attacked repeatedly in Kota and other places and Muslims of course are alienated from it. The terror attack in Jaipur has yet not been solved and there seems to be no headway either. Before that terror attack in Ajmer also seems to be deadlocked. Except blaming HUII and SIMI nothing much has happened.

In M.P. BJP's image has been considerably tarnished on account of several corruption scandals involving ministers and Chief Minister himself. The BJP Government tried to divert attention by arresting SIMI members and even claimed that SIMI training camps were going on in deep forests near Indore. The forest officers themselves denied existence of any such training camps. Also, despite lot of press publicity about arrest of SIMI activists much has not been revealed of their involvement in terrorist attacks in Mumbai train blasts and other places.

Unlike Gujarat which is citadel of Hindutva and where polarization between Hindus and Muslims have gone deep, M.P. and Rajasthan, though being ruled by BJP are not citadel of Hindutva and anti-incumbency factor can make lot of difference. Anyway, even if this factor does not work it will be very difficult for BJP to improve its tally over last election and BJP can hope to come to power only if it improves its tally over last elections in these states. It seems difficult, if not impossible.

In Karnataka it is likely to improve its tally in Parliament over last elections and it is victory in Karnataka (though it fell short of simple majority); which has made BJP so ambitious. After Karnataka results it is going all out to form government at the Centre in 2009. It is scouting fresh faces for being nominated for Loksabha elections. The Saffron Brigade is pushing to establish its roots across the Vindhyas. Unlike the Congress BJP is ever alert and has already begun feverish preparation for the forthcoming Parliamentary elections.

One more advantage it has is that it is cadre-based party and apparently has a cause of Hindutva to inspire its cadre and to work hard for Hindutva victory. The Congress, on the other hand not only does not have cadre but also has no cause which can inspire people. Only those who love power are attracted to it. In states like Gujarat its members are so much in awe of Hindutva that they have lost even lust for power and are not prepared to fight Hindutva ideology. They have just surrendered.

BJP is aware of the fact that all Hindus are not behind it and Indian diversity is a stumbling block for it. It is, therefore, not willing to forego Muslim votes altogether. It thus wants to play both the cards: that of Hindutva and wooing minorities in very subtle manner. In his opening address in its executive meeting in Delhi in early June its president Shri Rajnathsingh mentioned Hindutva agenda and said that BJP will demand uniform civil code and deletion of article 370 from the Constitution. However, Mr. L.K.Advani, aware of the fact that Hindutva agenda will put off potential allies like TDP, he omitted any reference to it in his speech. He talked mainly of rising prices and increase of oil prices which has adversely affected people. He also referred to terrorism which he alleged is increasing during UPA rule and internal security is quite fragile.

Thus both Rajnath Singh and L.K. Advani together want to address separate constituency. While Rajnath Singh, who is not, and cannot be, prime ministerial candidate is addressing Hindutva hardcore constituency, L.K. Advani, carefully cultivating his image as 'moderate', is catering to general constituency. During late eighties Advani was indulging in extremist discourse on

Ramjanambhoomi issue to ensure more votes for the BJP, Vajpayee was cultivating his 'moderate' image. Both together succeeded at last in 1999 election.

BJP on the whole would lie to project moderate image and would try to raise only issues of general interest like price rise and internal security not only to Hindus who dislike its Hindutva agenda but also to try and win a small percentage of floating Muslim votes. BJP has set up its own minority front mainly wooing some Muslims to woo these floating Muslim votes who raise issues of minority concern.

But no one should have illusion about its Hindutva agenda which it can never forego as it has strong ideological links with the RSS who is determined to establish Hindu Rashtra in India and is silently and steadily working in that direction. Let us recall that the then Jansangh did not sever its relations with the RSS even when it took wove to accept secularism and merged itself with Janata Party formed by Jaiprakash Narain to defeat Congress in post-emergency period in 1977. The dual member controversy brought down Janata Party government but the Jansangh refused to break relations from RSS.

It would thus be knave to expect BJP to become really moderate and pursue secular agenda. But it may, for tactical reasons, subordinate its Hindutva agenda to win elections as it no more can ensure its victory. But it would only be a temporary measure. Once it manages to win elections it would let Sangh Parivar members to pursue Hindutva agenda silently or openly depending on political conditions.

Since its birth in early fifties Jansangh has never given up its ideological goals and there is no reason to expect any change in 2009. Whenever it comes to power it would do everything possible to strengthen its ideological goal and will go all out to help financially and otherwise to various constituencies of Sangh Parivar like RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal. It may not be able to build Ram temple in Ayodhya (which is hardly its goal) but it would work consistently for establishing Hindu Rashtra. One need not have any delusion about it.

Let the Congress understand this and revive its secular ideology in a more determined manner and to inspire common people to build secular India. It is in its own interest also, besides that of India.