

Can Congress survive without Nehru-Gandhi dynasty?



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Rajiv Roy 24 May 2014 11785 views

The Congress debacle was imminent and equally looming was a harsh post-mortem that followed. The Congress in its latest sitting in New Delhi have arrived at communication strategy of the party was the main reason for the disaster. But that is only one side of the story. An over hundred year old party lost a general election, eyeing for a hat-trick, only because of communication is indigestible. But even this post-mortem is not free from encumbrances as it was more 'structured' and looked like a show. Chief Ministers of states and the party's president and vice-president have offered to resign but the party refused to accept their resignations. If a debacle of the magnitude of 44 seats out of 543 cannot earn severe overhaul then what is the Congress party waiting for, to wait and see its tally drop to nil? As the high drama over resignation unfolded in the national capital, the mother – son duo of president – vice-president, that is, Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi have proved once again that nothing is more important than the dynasty. Actually to come out of a dynastic mindset is very difficult and the electorate of this country have just witnessed that during the general election. For them corruption was not the main issue because their mindset was glued to the vote-banks which they thought would bail them out. There are opinions that until and unless the Congress party do not start to think itself as an entity outside the dynasty nothing is going to change. But is that possible?

Well going by the weight thrown by state Congress committees, loyalists and others it is ostensibly clear that this party exists because of the dynasty and it will not have any identity outside that. And so is the patronage. This patronage is deep-rooted among the rank and files of this party. We have just seen how Rahul Gandhi was shielded by her mother Sonia Gandhi and how the duo was prevented from resigning by the Congressmen. Perhaps, Rahul Gandhi may not have received the same treatment if the party president happened to be someone else outside the dynasty given its allies take on the decimation. We have not seen even a single resignation being accepted by the Congress party, so far, particularly those related to the poor show. Only drama in order to prove the masses how concerned are they were the order but inside whether these Congressmen have a skin is in doubt. Overtly shameless, it is a matter of doubt if this party would have won this election had its communication strategy went right. For the PR firms that it engaged, they need a track record of the party to build on but what has the Congress given in its decade long rule besides scams and corruption. And despite these misdeeds to think that the people would support them is like as the adage, “you can fool some people some time and some people all the time but you can’t fool all the people all the time”. Today the Congress is in such a position that with 44 seats it cannot even meet the minimum threshold that is required to be recognized as an official opposition party in the parliament. Well this is otherwise the beauty of democracy.

The national identity of Congress could well be up in the air as it is vulnerable to disintegration. Another similar poor show in the next general election or even in the upcoming states assembly poll this party may well not remain a force to reckon with any longer. In this general election the BJP's alliance parties alone have secured as many seats as the INC and its allies together. What does it indicate? If the BJP can rule on its agendas given the mandate then it may get another term in New Delhi in the next election and with the rise of the regional factions the war may well be between the saffron brigade and these satraps. And that a complete decimation of the Congress may well be true can be gauged from the fact that three former Congress factions that broke from the parent party have collectively won more seats this election than the Congress. Its debacle this time was also due to the wrong people in the right place. The referred / patrons close to the dynasty who are not well versed with ground realities spelt doomsday for the party as a whole. In contrast, the BJP on the other hand have put the right people at right place and that is the reason why today the saffron brigade could won a mammoth 73 seats out of 80 in UP besides making serious inroads in the southern region, eastern region and northeastern region silencing its critics that it is only a Hindi belt party. The biggest turning point, to me, was the candidature of Narendra Modi from Varanasi. This was a calculated gamble that played well in their favour.

But all in all what does the commoners in this country want. For them a stable government is what matters most that ensures peace and safety. One often touches the horrid tale of Godhra in 2002. But, what about the 13000 odd riots, as Lord Meghnad Jagdishchandra Desai, British economist and Labour politician said recently in a national media, which took place under the Congress regime. What is interesting is that people speak about Godhra carnage but what they fail to speak is why the train compartments were torched in the first place that spurred the riot. Was it not an equal butchery? Do we have to graduate in rocket science to understand that had that train compartment was not torched then there would not have been any Godhra. This is also one of the reasons why a particular religion is often identified with terrorism because even its leaders are quiet nay the rest of all from other spectrum. Heights of secularism!

Arun R Swamy, associate professor, University of Guam in his summary of the 16th Lok Sabha Election has brilliantly attributed the reasons of the Congress debacle to the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. He said that there is an intense unwillingness of the Congress party to develop mechanisms to allow vibrant leaders to rise from within. The unwillingness to allow any of the rival parties to grab the top position has always resulted in relatively incompetent prime ministers and sometimes 'puppets' prime ministers who can be used as a pawn by the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. Dr Manmohan Singh was dubbed as one of those by Dr Sanjaya Baru's latest book. The party fear that in doing so it may lose the dynastic grip and so we have always seen someone from the dynasty or their projected ones occupying the top position in a remote control fashion. Swamy went on to say that the dynasty is the second vulnerability itself. This dynastic style of leadership was seen when Rahul Gandhi was ostensibly made the prime ministerial candidate as it can't see anything else outside. But that the electorate is fed-up with this attitude of the Congress dynasty and was informed by them in their mandate. It is enough, perhaps, for this party to understand whether it can opt for an alternative method of leader selection. So far, there is no clear signal to this.

The Congress party has to come out of its high command power structure centred to the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty or else there may be more breakaway factions in future. There is already an indication to this effect in Assam where chief minister Tarun Gogoi is facing one of the toughest situations in his political career. We have already seen breakaway factions of Congress doing well in this election and this can be a sign of encouragement for those who are increasingly bogged off by the Congress dynasty. It is time to unite and that too very fast considering the state assembly elections that are due. In Meghalaya, UDP leader Paul Lyngdoh, who is known for his changing party lines every now and then, has echoed recently that the BJP rise in Meghalaya is a sign of concern. He even played a pro-BJP card, which started prior to the general election, that the Modi-wave was the reason behind the poor show by regional parties in Meghalaya. By saying so, he is indicating, as many says, that he may well be eyeing a BJP berth in near future. And given his own constituency voting overwhelmingly for BJP like other urban Shillong constituencies, he surely knows where the wave is flowing.

The BJP on the other hand also have to be alert not only about outside obstructions but also of its inside forces. The RSS has already raised its 'authority' head a couple of times in the past besides temperamental leaders like LK Advani, Uma Bharti and others. It is well known that Advani still feigns an irritation that he could not become the prime minister of this country and has even drubbed the Modi-wave behind BJP's victory. But leaders like him must realize that with changing times they should acclimatize with ground realities or else meet fates like Jaswant Singh. The historic mandate that BJP received should be reciprocated aptly and senior leaders like him with incomparable experiences must stand by the party. Nevertheless, this election was not only about the rise of BJP under Modi but equally the fall of Congress under its dynasty. Neither the BJP thought that it would do so well that it would earn majority on its own whereas nor the Congress thought that its tally of seat would drop to such a negligible level.

It is good as well as imperative at the same time that the dynasty was crushed. And going by the verdict and given the BJP's presidential election campaign centred on Modi, it is evidently clear that Modi has single-handedly brought an end to the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, which was unimaginable before. But the dynasty will use their immense wealth, secret files of opponents gathered over the decades and other inside information to destabilize the country. Therefore, the threat still looms until and unless they are completely eradicated.

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