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## PM Cries Betrayal

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi deplored that the opposition parties and newspapers had backed out of the promises they gave the government when the Emergency was relaxed. The Opposition had assured the government that it would not indulge in any violence and indiscipline and newspapers would not publish any news which was detrimental to the interest of the nation, Mrs Gandhi said at Misrikh, UP. Mrs Gandhi said the Opposition had made several attempts at violence before the elections and tried to create anarchy among labourers, students and others. "The opposition parties are also trying to make capital out of the family planning programme by spreading rumours of alleged excesses," she said.

### Bollywood Speaks Up

The Bombay film industry suddenly woke up to express thundering resentment against the Union Information and Broadcasting Minister V.C. Shukla. Most film personalities privately regretted that "they missed an opportunity to voice their grievances". Shukla has been roundly blamed for "bullying and blackmailing the industry". Sri Ram Bohra, president of IMPPA, complained that Shukla had forced the industry to sell off their shares in the Indian Motion Picture Export Corporation (IMPEC) and were paid only 20 per cent share value. Vijay Anand, of the famous Anand trio, said the industry was shocked at the fate of Snehalata Reddy. "What has happened to her is happening to the whole industry," he said.

### Second Round Polls

Thirty million voters in Bihar, Nagaland and Uttar Pradesh will go to the polls in the second round of elections, which resume after a day's break. Tomorrow, the voters will elect 65 MPs from 861 candidates in 45 constituencies in UP, 19 in Bihar and one in Nagaland. The Congress is contesting all the 65 seats while the Janata Party is contesting 63 seats, the CPI 14 and CPM four.

## It takes two

As the BJP celebrates the wholesome mandates it has won in UP and Uttarakhand, and the installation of its governments in four out of five states that just went to polls, a familiar opaque darkness shrouds the Congress quarters again. Some voices have pierced the silence, but they are too few. The BJP has been accused of "stealing" governments with "money power" in Goa and Manipur, where the Congress was the single largest party.

Some Congressmen have also turned the searchlight inwards, if only to point fingers at "internal sabotage". Others, like senior leader Mani Shankar Aiyar, have sought to frame the Congress question in more impersonal ways: In these times of the Modi-BJP's dominance, should not the erstwhile "natural party of governance" pare down its self-image and ambition from being the "inclusive party" to becoming an "inclusive alliance"? Instead of trying to take on the Modi-BJP on its own, should it not project itself as only the binding platform on which disparate opposition forces, holding up the banners of "social justice" and "secularism", or simply "anti-BJP-ism", could come together in Bihar-style Mahagathbandhans? These rumblings mirror the unease within the party. But the scale of the crisis the Congress faces today demands a harder questioning, by a larger number of Congress men and women.

Successive poll setbacks have pointed to the party's missing regional leadership and to a culture where loyalty to the first family is rewarded more than talent, and party managers who negotiate deals in backrooms are far more powerful than those who do the hard labour of political mobilisation. Today, the Congress has neither a charismatic high command at the centre that can speak to all sections of the electorate, and all regions of the country, nor a responsive and autonomous leadership in the states. That is, the Congress crisis is also a crisis of leadership, and the party must acknowledge this if it wants to climb out of its decline. Here is a question, then, that more Congressmen and women need to ask themselves, aloud: Even if the Gandhi family functions as a glue within the party, isn't it time to face the fact that the dynasty's vote-getting capacities seem seriously eroded in a changing India? But more than that: Isn't it time for Congress men and women to acknowledge that the party is bigger than the family, and to begin owning their share of the responsibility for the mess they find themselves in?

Try as it might, the Congress cannot evade a wider questioning, and a more fundamental restructuring. The crises it is mired in are many — they range from the organisational to the political-ideological. Perhaps the reworking of the party's pact with the family is a good place to begin addressing them. But for that, the responsibility lies not just with the family, but also, and more, with the party.

*Fortitude is the guard and support of the other virtues.*

---John Locke

# Love jehad to sabka vikas: Can Modi tame Yogi?

By Amulya Ganguli

Did the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) desist from naming its Chief Ministerial candidate for UP before the assembly polls because it wanted to spring a nasty, or pleasant, surprise - depending on one's point of view - on an unsuspecting public?

For some, the earlier deafening silence on a possible Chief Minister might have been a deceitful ploy considering that as virtually the sole effective campaigner, Narendra Modi gave the impression that he remains focused on development notwithstanding a few sops to the Hindutva brigade as in the 'kabaristhan-shamshan ghat' controversy relating to the Samajwadi Party's alleged partiality towards the Muslims.

To critics such as these, the choice of Yogi Adityanath - perhaps the most trenchant of the saffron hardliners - as UP's Chief Minister is also a message to the BJP's core constituency of communal-minded Hindus that for all the talk about 'sabka saath' and 'sabka vikas' or development for all, Modi's heart remains in the right place.

The jury will be out till it becomes clear whether the BJP is playing a double game. However, to give it the benefit of doubt, it has to be



admitted that so far the party's emphasis has remained on development with even the Yogi articulating the key word, vikas, in his first few comments after his selection was announced while the central observer, Venkaiah Naidu, repeated it thrice to remove all misgivings.

There is little doubt, however, that the choice of Yogi is one of the most audacious of gambles by Modi, far more than the demonetisation venture.

If the prime minister can make a person, whose anti-minority hate speeches figure prominently in Google searches, to change his saffron stripes, it will be an extraordinary achievement.

Perhaps Modi

believes that if he himself can change from being a textbook fascist, as sociologist Ashis Nandy said, or a modern-day Nero, in the Supreme Court's view, or a person who "presided" over the killing of thousands, in Manmohan Singh's words, into an "avatar of modernism and progress", to quote Congress M.P. Shashi Tharoor, then so can the Yogi.

It is also undeniable that if anyone can bring about such a seminal transformation, it is Modi. It's not only that there is no one else in the BJP who is capable of inducing a metamorphosis of this magnitude, there has also been a manifold increase in Modi's clout after UP's overwhelming verdict in the BJP's favour.

As the master of all he surveys at the moment, he can take the party and the country in almost any direction that he wants.

It has to be remembered that in the last few months, Modi succeeded in clipping the Yogi's wings in respect of the latter's ghar wapsi and love jehad programmes. One doesn't hear any more of these provocative campaigns to reconvert Muslims and stop Hindu-Muslim marriages. Modi also virtually called the gau rakshaks or the cow vigilantes anti-social.

Considering that all these operations had the blessings of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the BJP's ostensible mentor, Modi's boldness in

reining them in is obvious.

In this respect, he is way ahead of Atal Behari Vajpayee, the tallest leader in the BJP before him, who shied away from taking on the RSS in a frontal confrontation.

Even so, any effort to bring Yogi Adityanath in line will be Modi's biggest test. If he succeeds, it will be like inducing Hitler to embrace the Jews or Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of the ISIS expressing love for infidels.

If Modi fails, it will mean that the hopes of putting India on a fast track of growth since it will show that he is not serious about economic growth. Neither the domestic corporate sector nor the foreign investors will be

amused by such backtracking.

On the other hand, the taming of Yogi Adityanath will ring the death knell for all the saffron hawks whose hopes of ushering in their cherished Hindu rashtra where the Muslims and Christians will be second class citizens will be dashed.

From this standpoint, such a fallout will ring the curtains down on a project of Hindu supremacy which the RSS has pursued since its inception in 1925.

Much depends, however, not only on whether the mahant of Gorakhnath math eschews his long-standing anti-minority outlook, but also on whether he can function as an efficient Chief Minister. The selection of two deputy Chief Ministers shows that the BJP is not too sure on this score obviously because the man of "religion" has no previous experience in governance except that of running his math (monastery).

For the BJP, sushashan or good governance in U.P. is indispensable because of Modi's promise of enhancing its growth rate since, as he said, India's growth is linked to that of its biggest state. Since UP is one of the BIMARU or sick states, the challenge is all the greater.

Modi, therefore, can be said to have embarked on his most daring mission.

(Courtesy: IANS)

## Winning was the easy part

By Tavleen Singh

It is not just because the election in Uttar Pradesh was a rehearsal for 2019 that the results from this state are more important than the rest. The real significance of the remarkable mandate that this state has given Narendra Modi (not the BJP) is that voters see him as a new kind of political leader. He seems to have sensed this because in the first speech he gave after the results he spoke of building 'a new India'.

With his uncanny knack for keeping his finger firmly on the pulse of Indian voters, he knows that what they really want is a different India. This is especially true in Uttar Pradesh where crumbling walls of caste and religion have been kept standing by cynical politicians who benefit more than voters. These walls have decaying foundations and would have fallen long ago if a political leader had dared to try and knock them down.

It is the misfortune of Uttar Pradesh that its political leaders have been cynical caste leaders for decades, glaringly evident in Akhilesh Yadav's first response to his humiliating defeat. He told reporters that he



believed he lost because people voted for those who misled them with false promises rather than those who worked hard for them. Had this scion of the mighty Yadav dynasty been humble enough to travel on his cycle in rural parts of his state while he was chief minister, he would have noticed that the people ask for very little and that very little was what he failed to provide.

It is disgraceful that while he boasted about distributing laptops he did not notice the appalling state of schools in Uttar Pradesh. Disgraceful that he did not notice that farmers stayed up on

cold nights to use the dribs and drabs of electricity that his government so erratically provided. Disgraceful that he did not notice that people did not even have access to drinking water or roads. It is not his fault that these things do not exist, but it is his fault that he was unable to make the improvements people so desperately want.

The point I am making is that it will take very little to create a 'new' India. So little that if the army of newly elected BJP legislators just do their jobs, Uttar Pradesh could change dramatically before the next general election. In the villages I

travelled through during the election campaign, people pointed to broken bridges and the broken roofs of schools and hospitals to make the point that their elected representatives had failed them. The cost of repairing some of these things was so small that I asked why they did not pool in their own resources to make the repairs. To this they said, 'If we do what you are saying, then the MLA will take all the credit for it and we will see even less of him.'

This is indicative of a general mindset that believes the 'sarkar' has to do everything and the people nothing at all. But it is a mindset created by

long decades of Nehruvian socialism, and although it has changed in more urban parts of India, in largely rural states such as UP it has hardly changed at all. So if the Prime Minister wants to prove that he can bring about change, development and prosperity, then he now has his first real and most challenging opportunity.

He said during the election campaign that India could not move forward if UP continues to lag behind, but can he make it catch up? Can a BJP government in Lucknow show that it can bring about the sort of transformation that Modi is credited

with in Gujarat? Can the Prime Minister prove that in this state ruined by colonial ideas of governance and ancient divisions of caste and religion there can be political, economic and social change? This last ingredient is almost more important than all the others, and as the first Prime Minister to have talked of social change from the ramparts of the Red Fort, can Modi really make a difference?

If I have not once mentioned these things as being the responsibility of the chief minister, it is deliberate. The problems of Uttar Pradesh are so huge that it almost needs to become a department of the Prime Minister's Office for any change to happen. Modi speaks often of tourism as a vital economic tool and in UP he has a chance to show how this tool can be used.

It is beyond belief that Agra, that has the Taj Mahal, remains so ugly and wretchedly poor that the city looks like a vast garbage dump. Shameful that Benaras continues to resemble a city in terminal decay. Narendra Modi must personally take responsibility for bringing change. It was for him that UP voted.

(Courtesy: Indian Express)