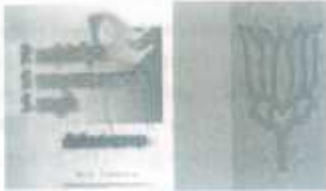


BJP-RSS Relationship: Some Questions

Alok Mehta



Alok Mehta has raised some basic and important questions and issues that need to be debated and deliberated widely. We would like to receive the comments, views and opinions of readers for publication in our next issue.

Keshavrao Baliram Hedgewar, was very clear in his mind about the relationship between the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), that he founded, and the individuals including leaders. In the Declaration Document of 1933 Hedgewar made it specific: "It is very necessary for discipline and functioning that swayamsevaks should obey the orders of the sanghsanchalak without asking any question. The Sangh would never allow a situation in which 'the nose ring becomes heavier than the nose.' This is the mystery of the Sangh."

Have Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Lal Krishan Advani, Pramod Mahajan and Venkaiah Naidu, who feel honoured by calling themselves swayamsevaks forgotten this basic Declaration Document of the Sangh after acquiring power? If not, can they announce that they would completely sever their relations with the Sangh? Even though they may like to do so, they cannot adopt the second alternative because it is difficult to change their mind and heart at this age. When George Fernandes, who has

always derived his support from the socialists and extremists, seeks support to remain in power from Sarsanghchalak Sudershanji and in the by lanes of Ayodhya, how can Advani's Venkaiah group ensure three-fourth majority in the next general election to BJP? Therefore, Lal Krishan Advani may not abide by the order of the RSS to resign from the post of President of the BJP for the time being, but he may not be able to avoid it for long.

In the subsequent development of events Advani supporters have begun to plead that immediately it would be difficult to give a replacement to Advani. Countering this argument one of the senior pracharaks of the Sangh quoted an anecdote that the former Sarsanghchalak Guru Golwalkar narrated to swayamsevaks on 23 November 1970 in Delhi. The anecdote was:

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"One camel was being taken from one place to another. The person walking ahead dropped the string tied to the nose of the camel. The string was crawling with the camel. A mouse that had just come out of his hole picked up the string and started moving with the camel. While walking ahead of the camel he taunted at the camel: Could you see my might? You are so huge still I am pulling you."

Guruji further commented: "Our organisation is functioning well and if I say with pride that I am responsible for that then my mind would be that of a mouse and never mine. Therefore no one should consider himself indispensable for an organisation."

When Guruji could not take the credit for the functioning of the Sangh even being the head of it, how can a person after leaving the Sangh make an organisation function single-handed? In fact Advani and Naidu both have antagonised a large number of pracharaks and loyal swayamsevaks of the Sangh, and the honest workers and regional leaders of BJP that all are waiting in the

wings to take revenge. The anger in their hearts can be felt like fire in a hawan kund in the courtyards of these two organisations. The patience of Sudershanji and Mohan Bhagwat has not given way in a jiffy. The statement on Jinnah was just an excuse. At best it was a coincidence. In the Advani-Naidu regime many leaders like Murli Manohar Joshi, Shanta Kumar, Pyareylal Khendelwal, Bangaru Lakshman, Keshubhai Patel, Uma Bharti, Yashwant Sinha and Babulal Marandi have felt insulted time and again. Sangh is also unhappy because many BJP leaders were behaving like a horse without bridle when they were in power.

Sangh tolerated dropping of certain items on its agenda like Ram mandir in Ayodhya, appropriate place for the national language—Hindi, and the scrapping of Article 370 because of the compulsions of the coalition government. But it did not approve the distance the BJP created with the senior leaders of Vishva Hindu Parishad. It also did not like the way the BJP tried to appease the minorities in the Congress style. When it became too much, the Sangh leaders had to intervene. Sangh has always given utmost importance to character and discipline in the organisation and the leaders desire that BJP should not become a carbon copy of the Congress. They want the leadership of the BJP in the hands of those persons who are fighters and full of life, have clarity of views, and strong determination. Their personal and public character should be impeccable.

It is interesting that many of

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the senior leaders of the BJP show their commitment to the ideology and leaders of the Sangh in their public statements but are in reality they not willing to come out of the politics of convenience. They accept the agenda of Hindutva in the party for votes but plead liberalism in their speeches to get the support of the other parties in the NDA. Many of the supporters of Advani believe in mysticism associated with him and expect that he would get a reprieve till the Bihar elections and the completion of the Golden jubilee of the Party. They also feel that there would be significant developments in the Government at the Center. They are still not able to believe that the BJP would remain out of power for the next three-four years and Advani may not become the Prime Minister in the near future. That is the reason that despite heavy pressure from the Sangh they want Advani to hold on to both the positions—the BJP President and the Leader of the Opposition.

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Leaders of Advani and Vajpayee groups do not want anyone else but him or her to be the Party President. Jaswant Singh, Murli Manohar Joshi, Narendra Modi, Rajnath Singh, Sushma Swaraj, Uma Bharti,

Arun Jatley, Pramod Mahajan, Bal Apte, Gobindacharaya, Yashwant Sinha, all are participating in the Presidential race. The Sangh wants to test the real mettle of the person before

agreeing to the person to be the President. The Sangh is cautious because it never expected that Advani would change sides and would put on a mask of a liberal. The Sangh leaders are euphoric because they believe that the Congress has great scarcity of able leaders. They are imagining their old swayamsevaks in the corridors of power as alternate front ranking leaders. Though BJP and VHP are posed as autonomous units, they want their swayamsevaks to sacrifice every thing to achieve the Hegdewer's dream of a 'Hindu Rashtra' (Hindu Nation). But the real question is, can the BJP really acquire power single-handedly on the basis of a conservative agenda of Hindutva, Hindu Nation, and a common civil code? If it were possible, the next question would be, how much would be the credibility and acceptability of such a government in the contemporary international scenario? And, the next would be, whether the next round of 'pulling each other's legs' activities would bring solace to the society and polity or would make it more poisonous? Only those who are associated with the political system should find out the answers.

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