Be a sutradhar, not an adhinayak

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 12 February 2015 15:32

BJP's attempts at forcefully replicating the Lok Sabha majority in states will create discord, writes **Sidharth Mishra**

In the winter of 1993, at the height of the Ramjanambhoomi movement, elections were held for the assembly constituencies of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and the newly created assembly of Delhi. With Lal Krishna Advani as the face of the movement, riding on the demolition of Babri Masjid a year earlier, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) went into elections with the confidence of a victor.   They had good reasons to believe it. The BJP was counting on the sympathy garnered after the dismissal of state governments under Kalyan Singh (UP), Sunderlal Patwa (Madhya Pradesh) and Bhairon Singh Shekhawat (Rajasthan) by the Centre in the wake of demolition. The results were startling, which was most aptly depicted by a cartoon of the venerable RK Laxman. It showed the party celebrating its victory in 'Battle for Delhi'   with BJP's Delhi leader Madanlal Khurana holding a miniature chair to Advani.   The party had lost its fight in other states of the Hindi heartland, which in turn had given a new lease of life to then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, who was otherwise facing huge resentment on account of his failure to prevent the demolition of the disputed religious structure. Unlike in 1993, when a victory in Delhi was seen as a consolation prize for the party, BJP's poor performance this time around is going to hang around neck of the present leadership like an albatross.

What has gone wrong for the BJP post-2015 Lok Sabha polls? Though the cheer leaders of Prime Minister Narendra Modi would want us to believe that his victory chariot has been on the roll in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Jammu and Kashmir, the battle in all three states was hard-fought and witnessed nail biting finishes. There is a subtle message in the results which have emanated from these states and now also from Delhi: India's constitution may be unitary in spirit but it's federal in form.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his protégé Amit Shah should not repeat the mistake of trying to replicate the party's brute majority in the Lok Sabha in the state assemblies. They do not have to look long back in history to find similarities. On becoming prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, riding a huge popularity wave, had attempted similar exercises in the states. By poking state governments which did not belong to his party, he made the regional satraps come together in a grand alliance, forcing the Centre's hand on several issues.

The coming together of regional satraps had its effect on politics at the Centre. This pushed Rajiv Gandhi to commit one error after other. First he changed the divorce law on the demand of conservative Muslim leaders, following the Supreme Court order in Shah Bano case, thereby opening the locks of the Ramjanambhoomi to assuage Hindu sentiments. He also created a Frankenstein in Vishwanath Pratap Singh, who was ousted as Finance Minister for going after

Be a sutradhar, not an adhinayak

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 12 February 2015 15:32

industrial monarchs.

Rajiv Gandhi was given a majority by the electorate because he had promised to take India into the 21st century. He in fact did his bit by introducing the six technology missions on drinking water, immunizations, literacy, oil seeds, telecommunications and dairy production, besides the introduction of computers. His tenure, however, is remembered not for the policies of his government, which over the years have accrued long-term benefits to the nation, but for all the wrong political decisions.

It's said that populism and good governance don't go hand-in-hand. This may be true in certain cases. But in a country, which is still habited by a large number of poor people, welfare measures are mistaken for populism by market-driven economists. Matters of foreign policy and economic reforms in a country like India would always come second to the needs of running home and hearth.

Rajiv Gandhi too was admired for the style statements he made through the Jodhpuri suits and shawls he wore and the way then US president Ronald Reagan had walked him to his car holding an umbrella. These elements gave him a position of pride in the esteem of Indians. Though it only lasted for some days, and subsequently the euphoria died soon. He was ousted from office after he could not counter the "opposition gang-up" against him. I wonder if Prime Minister Narendra Modi is moving towards a similar predicament.

Mr Modi's cheer leaders would make the Prime Minister believe that the space given to Aam Aadmi Party's Arvind Kejriwal in Delhi poll by media was due to the extreme bias newspersons have against the BJP. This is not true. Less than a year-and-half ago the same media was juxtaposing then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Independence Day address from the ramparts of the Red Fort with the speech Mr Modi gave at some state government function at the same time.

Less than a fortnight ago, the media went to town with a saturated coverage of US President Barack Obama's visit to New Delhi and the prime minister given due credit for its success. Therefore, if the media asks question about "projecting a distinguished citizen with no political record as a prospective CM," just a few days away from the polls, its intentions should not be doubted. Rather the preparedness of ruling party to stand against the challenges posed by anti-incumbency, created within a very short period of rule, should be scrutinised.

The Prime Minister will have to change his philosophy of governance from "Ekla Chalo" to that of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam." Despite not being stated in constitution, India is federation of not just diverse cultures and languages but also economies. A successful Prime Minister will have to cast himself as a "Sutradhar" (leader of a choir) and distance himself from "Adhinayakwad"

Be a sutradhar, not an adhinayak

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 12 February 2015 15:32

(absolute leader of a syndicate). Otherwise, his government would fail as a symphony.

The author is Consulting Editor,
[Millennium Post](#)