

By Sidharth Mishra



Gurdwara Rakabganj Road is a quiet wooded street in Lutyens' Delhi. Albeit this avenue is home to several 'sarkari' bungalows, fascinatingly remodeled in keeping with the reputation of their allottee. There is a corner bungalow, which till last Saturday evening stood unsung, uncelebrated. An entry into the bungalow welcomed one to the Spartan lifestyle of its occupant – Yogi Adityanath. As the head of one of the richest order of monks, Adityanath as five-time Member of Parliament from Gorakhpur could have definitely afforded much beyond the basic amenities which the government bungalow provided. Adityanath is a monk, a Sadhu, who inherits lineage from his spiritual father Mahanth Avidyanath, the late head of the Gorakhnath Math order. In the appointment of Yogi Adityanath, the BJP leadership has maintained the trend of handing over the leadership of the state to the non-elite within its own party.

One of the biggest charges brought against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, when he took charge of the office was that he would perpetuate the rule of the corporates. The functioning of his government at the Centre and handing over leadership in states, where the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) has deep roots, to such people as Manohar Lal Khattar in Haryana, Trivendra Singh Rawat in Uttarakhand, Raghubar Das in Jharkhand, and now Yogi Adityanath in Uttar Pradesh, clearly shows that the Prime Minister is working towards creating a club of powerful politicians consisting of political non-elite within his own organisation, a kind of a Left wing within the BJP but hued in deepest shade of saffron. Before taking the discussion any forward, let me attempt defining Left wing in politics for the understanding of the readers. In the past 25 years, political scientists (Smith, T. Alexander; Tatalovich, Raymond (2003).

Cultures at War: Moral Conflicts in Western Democracies.

Toronto, Canada: Broadview Press; Bobbio, Norberto; Cameron, Allan (1997).

Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction.

University of Chicago Press; Ball, Terence (2005). *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought.* Cambridge University Press; Thompson, Willie (1997).

The Left In History: Revolution and Reform in Twentieth-Century Politic.

London: Pluto Press.) have come together to define Left Wing Politics as supporting social equality and egalitarianism, often in opposition to social hierarchy and social inequality. It typically involves a concern for those in society whom its adherents perceive as disadvantaged relative to others, as well as a belief that there are unjustified inequalities that need to be reduced or abolished. Coming back to the politics of the Narendra Modi and his attempt at demolishing the elite within and outside his party, this can be further explained by introduction of economic reforms like demonetisation of the Rs 500 and Rs 1000 currency notes just ahead of

the elections in five states, of which survival in three was crucial to his own credibility and existence. The narrative which emerged was that of the Prime Minister fighting corruption for the sake of the poor, and the opposition faltered in opposing it without comprehending its deeper implication. It actually addressed the concerns, as reflected in the definition of the Left - "there are unjustified inequalities that need to be reduced or abolished." However, pushing forth the definition of the "unjustified inequalities" did not stop at the matters in mere economic domain. The campaign in Uttar Pradesh saw it getting replicated in the cultural concerns. The Prime Minister vociferously pushed the agenda of "unjustified inequalities" for the majority community. When the Opposition went to town crying wolf on the BJP leaders raising the issues of land for the last resting place – '

qabaristan

' and '

shamshan

', and power supply during Ramzan and Diwali, little did they realise that they were ending up reinforcing the BJP agenda of "unjustified inequalities" in matters of allotment to the majority community. This trend can also be defined as new age egalitarianism – the Saffron Egalitarianism. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Egalitarian doctrines maintain that all humans are equal in fundamental worth or social status. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary says, the term has two distinct definitions in modern English: either as a political doctrine that all people should be treated as equals and have the same political, economic, social, and civil rights; or as a social philosophy advocating the removal of economic inequalities among people, economic egalitarianism, or the decentralisation of power. Extrapolating these definitions to Narendra Modi's narratives of politics and governance, we find that an extraordinary synergy is visible. While demonetisation created a perspective of ending economic inequality in a rich versus poor situation, the campaign on – '

qabaristan

' and '

shamshan

', the dialogue of majority persecution for the sake of minority appeasement made an effective impact. It did not end here, it went to pursue the "Egalitarian agenda" further by pushing the campaign for "

Ek Vidhan, Ek Samvidhan

" that is one law and one Constitution. The issue of "triple talaq" had the orthodox Muslim clerics fuming, and liberal intelligentsia fanning the anger, much to the glee of BJP's campaign managers. The more interesting has been Prime Minister Modi's ability to create that sense of "empowerment" among the people through the use of technology. The access to Prime Minister's office through a twitter handle has created a sense of such accomplishment that the Opposition would find it very difficult to counter especially by deploying the heirs of political elite using clichéd discourse of Modi being "

Maut Ka Saudagar

" and "

Jawano Ke Khoon Ka Dalal

". As of now, effective opposition to Modi looks like an insurmountable challenge for the Opposition as its leadership lacks in confidence to lead the campaign which hinges too much on aides and advisors including professional poll managers. It has to recognise that Modi represents the new Left, as mentioned earlier, dyed in saffron, making it more potent. How can

Rise of Saffron Egalitarianism

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he be bested. Rahul Gandhi should have learnt Prashant Kishor doesn't have the answer.

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