

NOTE

No 'Human Face'

Bharat Jhunjhunwala writes :

The Congress Party is rightly agitated with its defeat in Uttarakhand, Punjab and Delhi and the impending lackluster performance in UP. The Left Parties and many Congress workers feel this is due to the adverse impact of economic policies being implemented by Dr Manmohan Singh on the common man. On the other hand the Prime Minister and Finance Minister repeatedly harp on the eight percent-plus growth rate that has been achieved and suggest that the defeats have more to do with organizational weaknesses.

The economic growth rate has unquestionably accelerated. The question is whether this has impacted the common man in a favourable way. If anything BJP's 'India Shining' slogan was also woven around high growth rates towards the end of that Party's rule but the Congress, under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, was able to expose its hollowness as far as the common man was concerned. The same logic could apply to the Congress' claim of high growth rates now.

Under ordinary conditions it is assumed that all sections stand to benefit from high rates of growth. Digging of a tube well by the landlord increases the employment opportunities for the agricultural labour. Establishment of a car factory creates opportunities for shop keepers and taxi owners. But this is only the directly visible impact. The overall impact can be opposite.

BJP had given the slogan 'India Shining'. Sonia Gandhi argued that India was shining only for a few and not the masses. Sonia's argument had merit hence she single-handedly brought that message successfully to the people. The Party did not contribute much to taking this message to the people then. The same Sonia Gandhi is present before the people today. She is now unable to garner votes even though her government is in power at the Centre. Pray, why is she unable to get the message across today? Reason is that the message itself is flawed. The policies of the Congress are the same as those of the BJP and have impacted the common man adversely. Schemes like Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and Rural Health Mission benefit government employees more than the people. Thus the Congress has drawn a blank. □□□