

COMMENT

THE BRAHMIN FACTOR

THE RECENT DEFEAT OF BJP IN UP elections has given it not only a great shock but also has made its leaders review its policies. The BJP in UP was deserted even by the Brahmins, its traditional vote bank. Generally up to mid-eighties the Brahmins were voting for the Congress. The Congress used to win elections by getting votes of Brahmins, Muslims and Dalits. However, when the Muslims deserted the Congress in late eighties on the question of laying foundation stone of Ramjanam-bhoomi Temple, the Congress lost power and so Brahmins also deserted the Congress as there was no chance of its coming to power.

The Brahmins switched their loyalty to the BJP as it was raising the issue of Ramjanambhoomi and had much better chances of coming to power. The Brahmins continued to vote for BJP as long as it had potential to capture power either by itself or through suitable alliances. However, during the 2007 assembly elections in UP Ms Mayawati was the rising star for many reasons, one was her alliance with both Brahmins and Muslims.

Ms Mayawati was following the well-tested Congress formula of Brahmin-Muslim-Dalit alliance to win the elections. She had solid Dalit base and had also convinced the Brahmins to vote for her. Not only this she had wooed the Thakurs also and was sure to get votes of a section of Thakurs too. The Brahmins weighed all this and deserted the BJP who had any way never fulfilled its promise to build Ram Temple. The BJP was, however, hoping against hope that Brahmins might vote for it but drew blank.

The BJP also tried to woo Hindus by not, only its Ramjanambhoomi rhetoric but also by circulating anti-Muslim CD. It could not of course get away with anti-Muslim CD. as the Election Commission took notice of it and stopped it from using it. This was also a moral as well as a legal blow to the BJP. Having lost elections in its own den is a serious setback to its senior leaders.

However, there is no easy way out for them. To revive itself in U.P. in the absence of any wave in its favour is an Herculean task. With 20 percent Muslims of UP hostile to it and Brahmins also having deserted it the party is under pressure to change its virulent anti-Muslim course. But that is again not an easy task. The saffronites are facing a double-edged sword that cuts both ways.

It is very interesting to note that Mayawati, encouraged by her success in UP in getting Brahmin votes, is trying to woo Brahmins in other states too. The Brahmins are also elated by the UP experiment in as much as it has opened new doors for increasing their political influence by supporting the BSP. Recently the All India Brahmin Federation (AIBF) has decided to support the BSP in all future elections in its convention held in Tirupati. It also wants to embark on a special mission to improve Brahmin-Dalit harmony. □□□

