

NOTE

BJP-Left Alliance

Bharat Jhunjhunwals writes :

ELECTIONS ARE LOOMING IN five states and general elections are not far behind. Some commentators are talking about the need of the hour is for the BJP and Left forces to come together. Right now it seems impossible but anything is possible in parliamentary politics. Congress seems to have outlived its utility.

The Congress Party was established by British officer Alan Octavian Hume. He was worried that native Indian people might take to armed resistance against British rule. Historian Romesh Dutt quotes from a memorandum written by Mr Hume: "Many entries (in Government records) reported conversations between men of the lowest classes, all going to show that these poor men were pervaded with a sense of hopelessness of the existing state of affairs, that they were convinced that they would starve and die, and they wanted to do something. They were going to do something, and stand by each other, and that something meant violence." Historian Dutt explains that the Congress was formed to provide native Indians with a forum to vent off their anger. Dutt says that Lord Dufferin told Mr Hume that it would be very desirable that Indian politicians should meet yearly. The Congress was floated to provide such a platform. Dufferin set the following objectives for this platform :

"Amongst the natives I have met, there are a considerable number upon whose loyal-cooperation one could undoubtedly rely. The fact of their supporting the government would popularize many of its acts which now have the appearance of being driven through the legislature by force; and the government of India would cease to stand up, as it does now, an isolated rock in the middle of a tempestuous sea, around whose base the breakers dash themselves simultaneously from all the four quarters of the heaven." The Congress was established to neutralize the tempestuous sea of native Indian which was dashing all the four sides upon the British government. The Congress was to be a safety valve for the oppressed natives to vent out their anger.

Gandhi tried to turn the Congress around and make it an instrument of true independence. But he succeeded only so far. Gandhi was willing to accept dominion status for India during the Cripps mission of 1942. He did not have difficulty in accepting British rule over India. The talks broke down on the question of when domestic self-governance was to be handed over to the natives. Gandhi wanted this to be given immediately while Cripps wanted this to be given after the war was over. Gandhi and Cripps both agreed to retain India as a part of the British Empire.

This same Congress has ruled the country for about 50 years since independence. It has basically continued to fulfil the objective for which it was established. Congress has kept India firmly entrenched in the Western orbit except for a brief spell under Indira Gandhi when Soviets dominated the Indian political and economic spectrum. It has displayed no love for hard nationalists like Bhagat Singh and Subhash Bose. It has pushed the interests of western powers in the last five years of its rule. It has undone the victory of developing countries secured by the BJP at Cancun; it has invested in US government securities to keep the dominance of that country on the world economy intact; it has made the nuclear agreement with the United States to provide entry to their multinationals in this field instead of developing home grown technologies; it has opened the country for clinical trials by western multinationals, and so on.

This character of the Congress is contra the thinking of both the BJP and the Left parties. The BJP is nationalist in its orientation as seen in the Pokharan explosions and the challenge made to the developed countries in the WTO. Similarly, opposing the might of western imperialist powers is high on the agenda of the Left parties. The Left parties withdrew support to the Congress government on the nuclear deal. Thus the two have a natural affinity and a solid basis for mutual cooperation. But the two do not see eye to eye on domestic economy. The days are not far when they might launch joint movement on some pressing issues.

The BJP is often called party of the businessmen. It wants to create amicable relations between workers and industrialists. In sharp contrast, the Left parties espouse 'class war'. They want to organize the workers against the industrialists. Many think the support given by past CPM Government of West Bengal to big businesses including Tatas in Nandigram and Singur should be seen as a tactical compromise rather than a true ideological position. Maybe, they are nursing a grand illusion.

The question is whether the class war as espoused by the Left is consistent with or opposed to the Hindu view of BJP. In truth there is no fundamental conflict between the Left and Hindu views. Lord Ram led an army of proletarian vanaras against imperialist Ravana. Similarly Left parties are leading the workers and peasants against western imperialism and its junior partners among Indian big businesses. The Hindu view accepts that the businessman is shortsighted. He is focused single-mindedly on making profits. The consequences of his business activities on the society are of no concern to him. For example a businessman will donate a part of his income earned from selling liquor and believe that he is doing *dharma*. It is so because he thinks his responsibility is to give charity from his income. The impact of his business on the society is not his concern. It is for the Government to decide whether to promote liquor or not and whether it has a positive or negative impact on the society. Once the Government has embarked upon a policy of selling liquor, his job is limited to making money from that business.

The class war as espoused by the Left Parties is anything but *dharma-yuddha* spoken of in the Hindu tradition hawked by BJP. There is no ideological difference between the two views. □□□