

Editorial

Thursday, May. 31, 2018

Are Congress and the BJP the only option of India? What about a third front?

The way people across the country are discussing seems to show that Congress and BJP is the only hope for the country. And why shouldn't it be both the party are back by multi millionaires and are rooted deeply to the soil of the country.

In democracy, every citizen has the right to contest election or become a Chief Minister of Prime Minister on the condition that he or she fulfilled the eligibility criteria provided in the constitution of India.

Colonial mindset of the people across the country (except some few) never thinks of other alternative political party which will protect the country's fate as well as what has been written in the Constitution of the country. When congress insult the equality and justice for all provided in the preamble of our constitution the BJP insult the same by forgetting that Secularism is one important content of the preamble of our constitution.

We should, we tried BJP but one man Government deceived people of India, it's like "known devil is better than unknown God".

It is an open secret that the Congress party is corrupt political party with scams after scams during their reign. The coming BJP to power except taking up some case where they could suppress the influential Congress leader, nothing which could be benefited to all the people of the country have been taken up.

Well and good BJP Government punished Corrupt Congress leaders. In 2G scam also Raja got clean Chit from CBI court, BJP government could not punish Rober Vadhra so far. Every body in India knows Politicians and rich people kept their black money in foreign banks but no government dare to bring that Black Money back to India.

If you talk about BJP Government, this is one man Government, many changes they have made, planning commission have been changed with Nity aayog government given clear cut instructions to Nity Aayog to put blind eye on dependent states like Manipur.

BJP assured that they will bring black money from foreign banks and that money in individual account, regarding employment BJP Government given assurance that also not fulfilled. Demonetisation badly failed but people suffered, without any vision GST implemented but people are suffering because of GST till date.

Atrocities on women and girls increased drastically, and many time ignored if such atrocities and rape are committed by their loyal MLAs. It happens in Manipur, till now nothing has been taken up against an alleged rapist MLA by either enquiring into the matter.

But why the people consider BJP and Congress as the only party that will comes to power at the center.

When it comes to NE states like Manipur and Nagaland which depend their economy to the central assistance, Congress MLAs or Ministers from Assam or Manipur will have no problem in changing the political party. It will takes only one night for change of political party in small dependent states like Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland to the political party which is in power at the center. The moment party change in the center the political party ruling in the smaller state will take no time for conversion.

Earlier, that is before the 2014 Parliamentary election people are fed up dynastic rule now people started pouring the anger over Hindutva domination.

A third front who will respect the preamble of our constitution is perhaps the need of the hour. Or otherwise the BJP so sacrifice their one nation one religion theory which people have been criticising as a hidden agenda. God Save India.

You can directly approach the Supreme Court for criminal case

Ravi Vishwanath,
Lawyer at Civil Court

Article 32 provides the right to Constitutional remedies which means that a person has right to move to Supreme Court (and high courts also) for getting his fundamental rights protected. While Supreme Court has power to issue writs under article 32, High Courts have been given same powers under article 226. Further, the power to issue writs can also be extended to any other courts (including local courts) by Parliament via making a law for local limits of jurisdiction of such courts. Kindly note that Court Martial i.e. the tribunals established under the military law have been exempted from the writ jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the high courts via article 33.

Importance of Article 32

Article 32 was called the "soul of the constitution and very heart of it" by Dr. Ambedkar. Supreme Court has included it in basic structure doctrine. Further, it is made clear that right to move to Supreme Court cannot be suspended except otherwise provided by the Constitution. This implies that this right suspended during a national emergency under article 359.

Article 32 makes the Supreme Court the defender and guarantor of the fundamental rights. Further, power to issue writs comes under original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. This means that a person may approach SC directly for remedy rather than by way of appeal.

Article 32 can be invoked only to get a remedy related to fundamental rights. It is not there for any other constitutional or legal right for which different laws are available

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Expanding Economy Beckons

The write up reproduce here is an excerpt from the lecture delivered by renowned Journalist

SUBIR BHAUMIK under the title **Northeast: A Thousand Assertive Ethnicities** on the **Arambam Somorendra Memorial Lecture** on June 10, 2012.

The anti-foreigner agitation unleashed both anti-Centre and anti-migrant forces. The ULFA grew out of the anti-foreigner movement against the "Bangladeshi infiltrators", people of East Bengali origin who have been settling in Assam since the late nineteenth century. Slowly, the ULFA's anti-migrant stance gave way to determined separatism and it started blaming "economic exploitation by Delhi" for being responsible for Assam's woes. But in the face of a fierce counter-insurgency offensive by the Indian army, it started targeting migrants again - this time not people of East Bengali origin but Hindi-speaking settlers from India's heartland "cow belt" states.

In the first quarter century after independence, while the rest of the country remained oblivious to the tumult in the Northeast, the region and its people saw only one face of India. The young Naga, Mizo or Manipuri knew little about Mahatma Gandhi or Subhas Chandra Bose and failed to see how Indian independence mattered for him or her. What these young men and women saw, year after year, was the Indian soldier, the man in the uniform, gun in hand, out to punish the enemies of India. He saw the jackboots and grew suspicious when the occasional olive branch followed. When rats destroyed the crops in the Mizo hills, leaving the tribesmen to starve, the Mizo youth took the Naga's path of armed rebellion. Far-off Delhi seemed to have no real interest in the region - or so it was felt by the distant peoples in India's far-eastern frontier.

In our generation, the situation began to change slowly, though the conflicts did not end. More and more students from the Northeast started joining colleges and universities in 'mainland' India, many joining all-India services or corporate bodies after that. Many complained of unfair treatment or even hostile attention but they remained behind to seek education and employment of a gainful kind. During my recent visit to Bangalore, I went to have a beer at a restaurant called Twenty Feet High. Of the ten waiters and waitresses, six were Nagas and four were Kukis, all ten from Manipur. Back home they may fight but out in Bangalore, they were all Northeasterners, with much more in common between themselves than with the locals. Though my good friend Sanjay Baruah usually thinks a Northeast identity does not work, it has come to stay - at least outside the Northeast. But that's true for all. A Bihari becomes a Bihari when he leaves Bihar. In the state, he is a Thakur, a Kurmi, a Yadav or a Brahmin.

The media and the government have started paying more attention to the Northeast and even a separate federal ministry, Doner, has been created for developing the region. Now federal government employees even get liberal leave travel allowances, including two-way airfare for visiting the Northeast - an effort to promote tourism in the picturesque region. As market economy struck deep roots across India, Tata salt and Maruti cars reached far-off Lunglei, Moreh and even Noklak. For a generation in the Northeast who grew up to hate India, it was now proving its worth as a common market and a land of opportunity.

Boys and girls from the Northeast won medals for India, many fought India's wars in places like Kargil, a very large number picked up Indian degrees and made a career in the heartland states or even abroad. The success of northeastern girls in the country's hospitality industry provoked a Times of India columnist to warn spa-connoisseurs to go for

"a professional doctor rather than a Linda from the Northeast." But a Shahrukh Khan was quick to critique the "mainland bias" against the Northeastern Lindas in his great film "Chak De India." And recently Aamir Khan in an interview with the Seven Sisters Post, has agreed to explore a plot for a film based on Northeast - and, if possible, with the beautiful girls and boys of this region in major roles.

Human Rights - A Game Changer? More significantly, the civil society of heartland India began to take much more interest in the Northeast, closely interacting with like-minded groups in the region, to promote peace and human rights. Suddenly, a Nandita Haksar was donning the lawyer's robe to drag the Indian army to court for excesses against Naga villagers around Oinam, mobilising hundreds of villagers to testify against errant troops. A Gobinda Mukhoty was helping the nascent Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) file a habeas corpus petition seeking redressal for the military atrocities at Namthilok. Scores of human rights activists in Calcutta, Delhi or Chandigarh were fasting to protest the controversial death of a Thangiam Manorama or in support of the eternally fasting Irom Sharmila, the Meitei girl who says she will refuse food until the draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act is revoked. Jaiprakash Narain and some other Gandhians had only worked as part of the Naga Peace Mission for a solution between the nation-state and the rebels. But the fledgling Indian human rights movement, a product of the Emergency, kept reminding the guardians of the state of their obligations to a region they said was theirs.

How could the government deny the people of Northeast the democracy and the economic progress other Indians were enjoying? What moral right has Delhi to impose draconian laws in the region and govern the Northeast through retired generals, police and intelligence officials? How could political problems be solved only by military means? Was India perpetrating internal colonization and promoting "development of under-development"? These were questions that a whole new generation of Indian intellectuals, human rights activists, journalists and simple do-gooders continued to raise in courtroom battles, in the media space, even on the streets of Delhi, Calcutta or other Indian cities. Whereas their fathers had seen and judged India only by its soldiers, a Luithui Luimgam or a Sebastian Hongray would soon meet the footsoldiers of Indian democracy, men and women their own age with a vision of India quite different from the generation that had experienced Partition and had come to see all movements for self-determination as one great conspiracy to break up India.

In a matter of a few years, Indian military commanders were furiously complaining that their troops were being forced to fight in the Northeast with one hand tied behind their back. Indeed, this was not a war against a foreign enemy. When fighting one's own 'misguided brothers and sisters', the rules of combat were expected to be different. Human rights violations continued to occur but resistance to them began to build up in the Northeast with support from elsewhere in the country, so much so that an Indian army chief, Shankar Roychoudhury, drafted human rights guidelines for his troops and declared that a 'brutalized army [is] no good as a fighting machine'.

Human rights and the media space

became a new battle ground as both the troops and the rebels sought to win the hearts and minds of the population. It would, however, be wrong to over-emphasize the success of the human rights movement in the Northeast. Like the insurgents, the human rights movement has been torn by factional feuds at the national and the regional levels. But thanks to their efforts, more and more people in the Indian heartland came to hear of the brutalities at Namthilok and Oinam, Heirangthong and Mokkokchung. Many young journalists of my generation also shook off the 'pro-establishment' bias of our predecessors and headed for remote locations to report without fear and favour. We crossed borders to meet rebel leaders, because if they were 'our misguided brothers, (as politicians and military leaders would often say) they had a right to be heard by our people. One could argue that this only helped internalize the rebellions and paved the way for co-optation. But it also created the ambience for a rights regime in a far frontier region where there was none for the first three decades after 1947. Facing pressure from below, the authorities began to relent and the truth about the Northeast began to emerge. The yearning for peace and opportunity began to spread to the grassroots. Peace-making in the region still remains a largely bureaucratic exercise involving shady spymasters and political wheeler-dealers, marked by a total lack of transparency. Insurgent leaders, when they finally decide to make peace with India, are often as secretive as the spymasters because the final settlements invariably amount to such a huge climb-down from their initial positions that the rebel chieftains do not want to be seen as party to sellouts and surrenders. Nevertheless, the consensus for peace is beginning to spread. Peace without honour may not hold, but both the nation-state and the rebels are beginning to feel the pressure from below to make peace.

The Elephant and Blind Men

In the last few years, the Northeast and the heartland have come to know each other better. Many myths and misconceptions continue to persist, but as India's democracy, regardless of its many aberrations, matures and the space for diversity and dissent increases, the unfortunate stereotypes associated with the Northeast are beginning to peter off slowly. The concept of one national mainstream is seen as an anathema even by the likes of Shahrukh Khan - hence the banter on the Manipur girls' "failure" to learn Punjabi in "Chak De India". The existence of one big stream, presumably the "Ganga Maiya" (Mother Ganges), is perhaps not good enough for India to grow around it. We need the Brahmaputras as much as we need the Godavaris and the Cauveris to evolve into a civilization state that is our destiny. The country cannot evolve on the misplaced notion of a national mainstream conceived around 'Hindu, Hindi and Hindustan'. The saffrons may win elections because the seculars are a disorganized, squabbling, discredited and leaderless lot, but even the Hindutva forces must stretch both ways to accommodate a new vision of India - or else they will fail to tackle the crisis of the Northeast.

India remains a cauldron of many nationalities, races, religions, languages and sub-cultures. The multiplicity of identity was a fact of our pre-colonial existence and will be a fact of our post-colonial lives. In the Northeast, language, ethnicity and religion will provide the roots

of identity, but a larger national identity should have more to do with civilization and multiculturalism, tolerance and diversity, than with the base and the primordial. For the Northeast, the real threat is the growing criminalization of the movements for self-determination and the conflicting perceptions of ethnicity-driven homelands that pit tribes and races against each other. "Freedom fighters" are being replaced by "warlords". They in turn may become drug lords because the region's uncomfortable proximity to Burma, where even former communists have turned to peddling drugs and weapons. Money from organized extortion may have given the insurgents in Northeast India a secure financial base to pursue their separatist agenda, but it has also corrupted the movements. And groups who have violently pursued the agenda of ethnic homelands and attempted ethnic cleansing have threatened to turn the region into a Bosnia or a Lebanon, increasing the levels of militarization and adding to the democracy deficit that Northeast has always suffered from.

A New Contradiction?

Despite these gloomy forebodings, some like the visionary B. G. Verghese, see great opportunities for the region in the changing geopolitics of Asia. India's "Look East" thrust in foreign policy may help the northeast by way of better transport linkages with the neighborhood and greater market access for products made in the region. But the government Vision 2020 document, recently unfolded by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, admits that the region needs huge improvement in infrastructure to become sufficiently attractive for big-time investors, domestic or foreign. Petroleum products made in the Numaligarh Refinery in Assam are now being exported to Bangladesh by less expensive river transport, but Assam's crude output has sharply dwindled in recent years and at least a part of Numaligarh's future requirement may have to be imported via Haldia Port in West Bengal.

Environmentalists and indigenous leaders have also opposed the huge Indian investments in the region's hydel power resources, saying that may prove to be dangerous in a sensitive geo-seismic region. As India tries to open up the Northeast to possible big-time investments, particularly in hydel power, a new kind of conflict, emanating from contradicting perceptions of resources-sharing, may replace the old style insurgencies. It all depends on how the leaders of the locality, province and nation shape up to the challenges of the future and make the most of the opportunities. We have to remember that the Northeast did not exactly erupt in revolt immediately after Partition and Independence. Even the Nagas who challenged the Indian state's desire to extend control to their hills gave the Phizo-Hydari accord a chance. Fighting erupted only in 1956 when India started to push in para-military troops in large numbers. The other states all gave India a chance before some of their idealistic young men joined the revolt, setting up armed groups to challenge the Indian state. They were fed up with poor governance, with neglect and economic deprivation, with insensitive handling of their distinct problems caused by both physical, psychological and historical distances. They all had a ready narrative because no part of India's Northeast had been incorporated in a pre-British empire - so the

(Contd. on page 3)