

Republicanism in the BJP



By Meenakshi Lekhi | Issue Date: September 14, 2019 | Updated: September 14, 2019 17:21 IST

Democracy is much more a moral commitment to the established republican principles than a mere theory of political governance to be practised as per exigencies. In the modern political context of India, however, it is just the reverse, where most of the political parties, that claim to be democratic, are hardly so in practice.

If one finds a situation of crisis in the political morality of our modern times, it has much to do with the nature and character of political parties in India, most of which are feudal in structure and dynastic in functioning. This not only throws the principles of democracy in the air but also runs against the grain of republicanism. The BJP, though, not only stands out with a shining exception to the crisis but also comes up as a democratic lodestar that has carried the ethos of democracy in the nation all through its long journey.



Illustration: Bhaskaran

After independence, the Congress, because of being the direct inheritor of the euphoria and the goodwill generated such an extent that everyone asked—“After Nehru, who?”

However, soon the question began to settle down as Nehru had begun the consistent political grooming of his daughter, Indira Gandhi, by making the latter his political secretary, dropping sufficient hints for the future; later he appointed her as the head of the women’s wing of the Congress in 1953, and subsequently the national president of the party in 1959—an appointment that saw her presiding over an aggressive movement in Kerala, leading to the unfortunate dismissal of the first elected communist government in India.

Lal Bahadur Shastri proved to be a brief hyphen between Nehru and Indira, as his sudden demise facilitated that providential inevitability—the ascendance of Indira to the chair of the prime minister, with the help of K. Kamaraj, who, for the second time, had sabotaged all chances of Morarji Desai, the most deserving veteran in the Congress, to become the prime minister. Thus began a long tradition of family rule that over the period gave the Congress its defining character. The rot in the structure is so much that after Rahul Gandhi abdicated from the position of the party president in August this year, the party could not find a substitute outside the family.

Even regional parties like the DMK, the TDP and the National Conference have their own dynastic structures where sycophancy, servility and submissiveness determine the fate of the cadre in the organisation, instead of ability and performance. None of these national or regional parties could put an objective structure in place where younger generations with talent or abilities could reach to the top solely on merit and substitute leaderships.

That is where the BJP stands out. It is the only party that carries the proud sentiment of republicanism in its DNA and that reflects in its hierarchical structure and functioning. The structure of the party keeps throwing new and promising persons from the cadre to the higher ranks where they are mentored for bigger roles and given the right atmosphere to realise their potential. This is the only party where a booth-level worker, distributing pamphlets and writing slogans on the walls for the party in his formative years, can expect to reach to the top and become its boss one day.

No wonder, despite the successive loss of stalwarts like Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Sushma Swaraj, Arun Jaitley, Manohar Parrikar and Ananth Kumar in quick succession, the party has survived the jolt and moved on.

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