

Nationalist Core Of Indian Politics

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ANY serious analysis of the Indian polity today must begin by taking note of the basic fact that the *Hindutva* movement has reached such proportions because the much desired "Left-left-of-centre consolidation" (*Future of Indian Polity* by Mr Rajni Kothari, July 19) has failed to emerge. This seems to be the basic lesson of history that neo-fascist movements begin to take root only when the Left and radical movements reach a dead end. Moreover, a study of the Indian Left has led us to the conclusion that the Indian left cannot unite in itself and for itself. It will remain 'small and growing' but without moving in the direction where it could fulfill some of its radical promises.

Three Codes

Historically speaking, the Congress has remained in power by adjusting and representing three codes of mass consciousness -- the codes of caste, class and community. Its encompassing vision of nationalism cuts across these sectional codes in order to bind them together into a flexible unity. Unlike the Congress, the opposition groups and parties have generally derived their strength from more or less one of these single codes while simultaneously flirting with others, especially the code of nationalism.

This has split the opposition into three rivulets: the communist parties (class code), groups based on the Lohia brand of ideology (caste code) and the Jana Sangh or the BJP (community code). But these three sectional codes, although they may be important characteristics of Indian social reality in themselves, cannot combine in the absence of an overarching ideology of nationalism.

The various factions of the Janata Dals cannot create a national-level party even if they meet for unity talks every day. The communist parties cannot play this role even when some of them are endowed with exceptional skills of creating unity out of diversity. Nationalism is not an organic part of the ideological make up of the Indian communists. For them, it was always a form of bourgeois ideology which blunted the edge of class consciousness, now even that of caste consciousness. This leads us to the conclusion that without the presence of a BJP-type group no alternative governments to the Congress could have come into being in the past.

The historical process of the for-

mation of the Indian nation and nation-state is structured through nationalism -- a nationalism which more or less overlaps with the Hindu cultural internality which remains latent in its Congress articulation. This means that a pragmatic form of politics which does not take nationalism as its point of departure would always remain provincial and factional.

Despite their best intentions, anti-Congress tendencies cannot but lead the 'caste' and 'class' codes (i.e. Janata Dals and communist parties) towards an open or tacit alliance and convergence with the ideology of sectarian Hindu nationalism. The 'Left' and the 'Right' must join hands in order to disrupt the 'centre'. Neither the CPM nor the BJP can resist this temptation. Let it be clearly underlined: the political parties representing the 'caste' and 'class' codes of mass consciousness are faced with a permanent dilemma -- they would always be forced to incline towards the BJP in their search for an alternative to the Congress, while their desire to be seen to be upholding the secular, developmental and egalitarian perspectives would always pull them towards the Congress.

Real Struggle

If this is accepted as a realistic appraisal of contemporary Indian politics, then the real struggle is, and continues to be, between organisations engaged in defining and redefining the nature of Indian nationalism through the actual mobilisation of the people on 'national issues' and not on 'caste' or 'class' issues. This is not to say that these national issues do not impinge upon and implicate the 'caste' and 'class' concerns. Indian nationalism has not and cannot relegate these issues to the margin in the name of a higher ideal.

How are the 'caste' and 'class' misuses to be handled? It is a question of power relations and cannot be handled by one section of the society. Therefore, nationalism has to be in command in order to ensure that a positive approach is evolved by causing a shift in power relations and without polarising the nation and creating the conditions of civil war. Those who are seriously fighting for social justice in this country must understand that in their onward march they might have to adopt a zigzag course with occasional halts, at times even reversing a little, in search of a better path of ascent.