

The Congress Manifesto 2019 – A Charter to Weaken India

2 APRIL 2019

Sitting in Opposition from 2004-14, I used to listen to the tall promises in the Congress Budgets. An early lesson that I gave to myself was “Don’t go by what is said, the devil is always in the details”. In the little time available, I have read the 53 pages of the Congress Manifesto. My worst fears have come true.

The tukde-tukde Manifesto

At point No.30, at page 35, otherwise an innocuous entry which deals with review of laws, rules and regulations. It repeals Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code which defines and then punishes an accused in sedition. Even for terrorists and hardcore criminals, it underlines the principles “bail is the rule and jail is the exception.” It seeks to dilute the provisions of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) . After having been spurned on various occasions to have a dialogue with the separatists, who want to settle for nothing other than cessation from India, it promised to have a continuous dialogue with them. It promises to dilute the presence of the Armed Forces in the Valley.

The Congress is the principal creator of the Jammu and Kashmir problem. It created a special status; it unconstitutionally brought in Article 35A. It rigged the 1957, 1962, 1967 as also the 1988 Assembly elections. This eroded the confidence of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and now its Manifesto only brings smiles on the faces of the separatists and the terrorists. A reference to “Kashmiri Pandits’ and their ethnic cleansing from the Valley is conspicuously absent in the Manifesto.

The Congress has always been soft on terror. Late Shri Rajiv Gandhi introduced TADA. Later the Congress revoked it. It revoked POTA. Now it wants to go further soft on separatism and terrorism.

There is only a lip sympathy in the assault required on Maoists violence, which Dr. Manmohan Singh had described as the greatest threat to India. In the recent elections, as also in the case of JNU and urban Maoists, Congress and Congressmen have always flirted with the Maoists as fellow travellers.

Nyay bluff

Most economists have already rubbished the Congress Party's Nyay. Between the Centre and the States, we are already giving to the poorest 20 per cent much more than what Nyay promises. As the economy expands to depleting poverty, further amounts can also be increased. To my initial query whether it will be reworking of the existing schemes or over and above the existing, the Congress Spokesman boasted that it will be over and above. I went through the detailed paragraphs in point No.9 at page 19-20. It contains the following statements:

- Fiscal prudence will be maintained.
- There will be pilots and testing phases.
- It will be implemented in phases.
- On how it will be funded, the Congress says that it will be funded from the future expansion of the economy.

Nyay, in the Manifesto, has now become a joint scheme of Central and the State Governments thereby diluting the initial announcement. The State Governments may well suggest that these existing subsidies are more than what Congress promises? To the vexed question of what happens to the existing subsidies, the manifesto says that 'only merit based subsidies will continue'. So the Centre will retain the power to say that some subsidies can be subsumed, diluted or abolished since they are non-merit based while in others the number of beneficiaries reduced since with every passing year many people are moving out of poverty.

Farm loan waivers

The Congress does not commit to the loan waiver but says that it has done so in several States. If you look at the track record of Karnataka, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, a miniscule effort has not even been put. Even the PM-KISAN is on hold in Congress States.

Public Health

It is extremely desirable that public health institutions be strengthened. The Congress is only giving slogans on healthcare. Shri Narendra Modi has implemented the Ayushman Bharat where 50 crore people get hospital treatment free.

Women's reservation in legislatures

In 2010, as the Leader of Opposition in the Upper House, I was instrumental in having the Constitution Amendment Bill passed in the Rajya Sabha where the Congress brought it. In the next four years, it did not press for it in the Lok Sabha. How can its track record be believed?

The GST

The Manifesto repeats that the Congress will try for Single Rate GST. Today most food items are taxed at zero. Aam Aadmi items are taxed at 5 per cent. The 28 per cent slab is almost over. In the next round, the two standard rates of 12% and 18% will be merged into a mid rate. Thus you will have, besides the non-merit goods, goods and services, taxed at zero, 5% and at about 15%. The Congress says irrespective of the product and the category of consumers using it, there will be one single rate. This effectively means that electronic goods, air-conditioners, television sets, washing machines should be taxed at the same rate as food items, chappals and coarse cloth. Rahul Gandhi got this wisdom from Singapore which does not have poverty. Both rice and Mercedes car in Singapore are taxed at 7 per cent.

The Manifesto compromises national security and has sham and bluff promises with little detailed understanding of the subjects involved. It is an irresponsible document which has never to be implemented since Congress looks a certain loser.