

India's Opposition is on a "Rent a Cause" Campaign

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The First Phase of voting is over. The "Modi" factor was writ large across the country. Amit Shah's challenge to the BJP workers to prepare for a 50% voting target in the BJP stronghold states even where there are opposition alliances seems coming through.

The opposition is in a disarray in many States, alliances having not worked out. Multi-cornered contest obviously favours the BJP. Verbal battles between the Left, Trinamool and the Congress and now AAP and the Congress are increasingly visible. On the leadership issue, the situation looks gloomier than what I had thought. The BSP leader Mayawati, the Trinamool leader Mamata Banerjee leave no stone unturned in running down the Congress President.

To oust a popular Government, an extremely popular Prime Minister, you need some real issues, not fictional issues. The Opposition wasted the past two years in a run-up to the polls "manufacturing issues" which didn't exist. The false campaign on Rafale didn't carry much weight. Loan waiver to industrialists was a lie, the EVM as an instrument of rigging was a bigger lie. Now that they are in the midst of the campaign for over a month what is the issue which they are able to focus on?

"The Signature Campaign Propaganda"

One important tactic is being to get some critics of the Government in different sections to sign memorandums against the BJP. Even in the 2014 campaign such desperate memorandums were signed. You will always find enough people on either side of the political divide in various disciplines who are willing to sign the memorandum one way or the other. These groups include 'academics', 'economists', 'artistes', 'ex-civil servants' and now even some former 'soldiers' – many of those whose signature appear have not consented to their signatures been put.

The BJP and its allies are speaking directly to the people. They speak through mass rallies, media and social media. Crores of campaigners are carrying the message of the party and the Government to the people. Not having built up a single major issue against the Government in the past five years, the strategy is to pick up an issue for a daily tweet or a press-briefing. This is the plight of the opposition campaign.

"A New cause on the daily basis"

One day Pulwama was questioned as self-engineered. The next day Balakot was questioned as a non-existent operation. The anti-satellite missile was passed off as a Nehruvian contribution even though Panditji's correspondence with Dr. Homi Bhabha established to the contrary. One day BJP is accused of whipping up war hysteria, the other day it is dubbed as pro Pakistan.

One day the focus would be on the BJP candidate's educational qualification, fully forgetting that a public audit of Rahul Gandhi's academic credentials may leave a lot to be answered. After all, he got an M.Phil without a Masters degree! There is no running thread in the campaign which connects which is being said today or what has been said over the last several months.

There is no leader, no Gathbandhan, no Common Minimum Programme and no real issue. Not surprisingly there are not many takers for a **“failed campaign”**. It is ‘Rent a Cause’ Campaign.