

Now that the dust of the race for securing the vote of Members of Parliament has settled down, I would like to draw the attention of the people to certain milestones on the political canvas of the country during the recent years.

2. In 1974 and 1975 my colleagues and I of the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD) requested the leaders of Jan Sangh, the Congress(0) and the Socialist Party a hundred times to join hands with us in forging a united political organisation, consisting of the then existing democratic parties. But none of them would respond: had they done so, perhaps, the country would have been spared the pains of Emergency. The Jan Sangh and the Socialist Party came round only after they had been thrown behind the prison bars and the Congress(0), only after its leader, Shri Morarji Deesai had been released and he saw immediate prospects of power in the announcement of parliamentary elections that the Government of India had simultaneously made.

3. We, particularly of the BLD had entertained dreams of replacing the political set-up that existed in 1976 by one <sup>in</sup> which was, by and large, inspired by the teachings of Gandhiji, especially those which had a bearing on the questions of individual freedom, poverty, unemployment, concentration of economic power and integrity in public life. The people of the country, particularly in the northern parts, gave us a vote of confidence which was, perhaps, unparalleled in the annals of democracy. To our regret, however, all these dreams were shattered soon.

4. No worker of the Janata Party — if ever there was a 'Janata Party' in existence in the true sense of the term — could claim that his Government had succeeded in cleansing public life, in improving the administration of the country or giving a new hope to the masses. On the contrary, there are hard facts about the conduct of more than one big-wig in the Party and its Government at the Centre which would make every Indian hang down his head in shame but, inasmuch as truth will always be out sooner or later, I leave it to Time to narrate

the story of this mis-conduct in high places. Secondly, owing to lack of understanding and political will on the part of the Janata Government's leadership, the country had been brought to the brink of economic and administrative chaos which was never witnessed before. Thirdly, it had little or no rapport with masses, particularly, the poor, the weak or the down-trodden and, therefore, was not aware of the stirrings of their hearts. Shri Morarji Desai is, by nature, incapable of wiping out the tears of any eye. Lastly, in the extra-ordinary success which the Janata Party achieved in election to Parliament in ~~xxx~~ March 1977 from the northern part of the country that was my special charge, and in the extraordinary gatherings of villagers that converged on Delhi on the occasion of my birthday on December 23, 1977 and on the same date in 1978, the Prime Minister saw a threat to his high office. In order to checkmate this imaginary threat, he increasingly leaned on the RSS and adopted other attitudes which only served to encourage communal trends in our society that will disrupt it still further instead of welding it into a stronger or more homogenous whole.

(5) All these failures and shortcomings could be traced to one single cause, viz., while he did not entertain any vision about the future of the country or nursed any ambitions about its prosperity or role in the comity of nations, Shri Morarji Desai had developed an inordinate desire to stick to power, at least, till 1982 and wanted to be left in peace till then. He could not, therefore, take bold decisions: Nor could he reshuffle his cabinet which the dictates of efficiency and integrity so clearly demanded. After my re-induction into the Cabinet on January 24, 1979, the Prime Minister and his Chief Lieutenants saw to it that my co-workers of the erstwhile BLD were systematically decimated - removed from positions of power in the States and eliminated altogether from the Party organisation. Those who had made little or no contribution to the emergence of the Janata Party decided to kick away the ladder on the strength of which they had ascended the pinnacles of power.

(6) The two Chief Ministers, belonging to the erstwhile BLD group, viz., Shri Ram Naresh Yadav of U.P., and Shri Karpoori Thakur of Bihar, were overthrown at the initiative of the

Centre. The way a meeting of the dissident <sup>sent</sup> Haryana legislators was convened at the house of the Prime Minister on June 6th, came as the last straw on the camel's back : drunk ~~km~~ with power the Prime Minister went to the extent of exhorting the Haryana leaders to keep firm and united in their resolve to oust Shri Devi Lal.

7. To give one more example of discrimination out of so many : No report was submitted by, nor any questions asked of a senior Jan Sangh Minister who had been deputed by the Janata Parliamentary Board, at my instance, to enquire into serious allegations against the Chairman of the Party, Shri Chandra Shukhar and the Jan Sangh Chief Minister of Rajasthan for manoeuvring the election of their own men from the Bihar and the Rajasthan Assemblies respectively for the Rajya Sabha at the cost of defeat of the official candidates in the early part of the current year.

8. So far as our position in the Party organisation was concerned, of the Election Panels constituted by the Chairman of the Party in November 1978, (the erstwhile BLD constituent did not find a place in the Central Election Panel and the two State Panels of Gujarat and Rajasthan at all. Whereas in the U.P. Panel, out of six members, one member was allotted to BLD, and two to the former Congress(O) which was able to secure only 10 seats out of 425 in the Assembly elections of 1974 and whose leader had forfeited his security.)

9x The ad hoc State Committees appointed by the Chairman in 1977 were another eloquent testimony to his sense of prejudice against the erstwhile BLD. The idea behind the constitution of the various organs of the Janata Party was to equate one constituent with another and everybody with everybody else irrespective of merits or past record.

9. Shri Raj Narain had been ousted in June, 1978 on a false and ridiculous excuse; understandably enough he became somewhat bitter and I had to publicly differ from him more than once. So, I never complained against the disciplinary action that

was taken against him. In contrast to this, however, the people will recollect that although about 100 legislators of U.P., belonging to Jan Sangh and Shri Chandra Shekhar's group, had voted against the Janata Government of the State on a Money Bill in March last, they were none the worse for it. No disciplinary action was taken against them at all.

10. The attitude of our friends reflected in the above acts, has to be contrasted with three hard facts, viz., (a) it was virtually the BLD leadership that brought the Janata Party into existence despite the reluctance of the other constituents; (b) it was I who was more instrumental in raising the Prime Minister to his august office than anybody else in the Janata Party as a result whereof I earned the hostility of some powerful elements in the party, and (c) the erstwhile BLD occupied a far wider place in the affections of the people than any other constituent of the Party.

11. My co-workers and a few like-minded friends, therefore, met on June 21 in Delhi just to survey the present scene and contemplate the future that awaited them. Much against my wishes, I was asked to spell out a strategy for self-preservation.

12. Few people will believe it when I tell them that I never imagined, much less planned the turn or shape that the political events in Delhi have taken since July 9. As recently as on June 24, I had publicly reprimanded my closest friend, Raj Narain Ji, for having made a statement which in my opinion, was likely to warp the image of the Janata Party. I had not yet been able to thrash out the steps that were necessary to undo the injustice under ~~the~~ which the erstwhile BLD was smarting when I was over-whelmed by events which eroded my pull or influence with them almost completely.

13. The Prime Minister went on to remark at a press conference on June 26 in the context of Shri Raj Narain's resignation from the Janata Party that if other members of the erstwhile BLD also left the Party, they would do so at their peril and it would make no difference to the stability of his Government. Now, this observation inflicted a wound that was difficult to heal or forget. Secondly, facts which came to light as a result of raids made by officers of the Finance Ministry at the office

premises of Shri P.N. Balasubramaniam on June 4 and 6, pointing to the complicity of the Prime Minister's son, Kanti Lal Desai, in his business deals, brought the Government down greatly in the estimation of my friends and the public in general. The image of a Prime Minister, in fact of any public worker that I have projected before my co-workers and the people, all my life, is far different from the one that Shri Morarji Desai exemplifies. Thirdly, a No-Confidence Motion which the Opposition tabled on July 9 provided an opportunity to my friends and co-workers which I could not prevent them from availing.

14. Memory of the public being short, I am putting only a few facts on record so that they might be enabled to make a correct appreciation of the political situation that obtains in the country today. Much more has been done by the custodians of public interest during the last 28 months to harm public cause than anybody can imagine or relate.

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