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BABUDDIN KHAN

THIRD CONCEPT aims at providing a platform where a meaningful exchange of ideas can take place among the people of the Third World. The attempt will be to communicate, debate and disseminate information, ideas and alternatives for the resolution of the common problems facing humankind. We welcome contributions from academics, journalists and even from those who may never have published anything before. The only requirement is a concern for and desire to understand and take the issue of our time. Contributions may be descriptive, analytical or theoretical. They may be in the form of original articles, reactions to previous contributions, or even a comment on a prevailing situation. All contributions, neatly typed in double space, may be addressed to:

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Designed by: Pt. Tejpal

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Existential Crisis Dilemma

With the 2014 general elections nearing the end, the tone and tenor of the election campaign is slipping to a new low with each passing day. With electioneering at its peak, insalubrious political sparring and nasty remarks by the leaders of almost political parties have become the order of the day. In response to Congress's slogan of secularism, the BJP first harped on development but within a short space of time the BJP and other constituents of the Sangh Parivar changed the tone and tenor of the election campaign in the two key swing states of UP and Bihar with certain inflammatory and openly anti-Muslim comments thereby communalizing the campaign.

The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) President Pravin Togadia and the BJP's Lok Sabha candidate from Bihar, Giriraj Singh, have given a definite communal turn to the political discourse of the 2014 general elections. The VHP leader raised the pitch in Gujarat against Muslims purchasing properties in "Hindu areas." Bihar BJP leader Giriraj Singh, who is also the party candidate from Nawada, while addressing an election rally in Deoghar, Jharkhand on 18 April this year in the presence of former BJP president Nitin Gadkari and Godda MP Nishikant Dubey, said: "Woh log Narendra Modi ko rokna chahate hain, woh Pakistan dekh rahe hain. Aane wale dino mein aise logon ke liye jagah Hindustan mein nahi, Jharkhand mein nahi, parantu Pakistan mein hoga, Pakistan mein hoga."

Perhaps this was not enough to heighten frenzy and there emerged reports in a section of media about an alleged Rashtriya Sayamsevak Sangh (RSS) letter imploring Hindu electors to turn out in greater numbers in Madhya Pradesh and party leader Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi's statement that a quick solution to the Ayodhya Ram temple issue needs to be found have altogether added to the communal discourse. Interestingly, all these statements have come within days of one another. BJP sources deny the party is working on a plan to introduce the 'communal' element at a time when the Lok Sabha elections are entering a crucial phase in the key swing states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Strangely denial comes as a damage-control exercise in the aftermath of the damage caused by the constituents of the Parivar. This seems to be a part of the well-concerted strategy. Concurrently, the BJP's propensity to speak in multiple voices is breeding confusion in the ranks of voters, party workers, and allies. Leaders have alternated between hard-line and moderate stances making it tough to distinguish a clear party line on prickly issues. It is imprecise whether this is a clever strategy of hedging to appeal to different sections, or is reflective of larger ideological and political differences.

On one hand, the party has quietly dropped its poll anthem; an aggressive, hyper-nationalist composition featuring PM candidate Narendra Modi. But the RSS request to the "majority community to vote 100 per cent or risk becoming history" reveals the workings of organisational machinery that thrives on communal polarisation. Such doublespeak does no credit to a party that is claiming support from all sections of the population, riding on the back of a pro-Modi and anti-Congress wave. The BJP's slogans promising jobs, good governance, zero-tolerance to anti-corruption, combating price rise, ensuring women's security and saving the girl child, have found resonance among all sections. Top-ranking leaders have taken the cue and intensified the push for moderation. Former BJP president Nitin Gadkari's clarification that abrogating Article 370 is on the BJP's agenda and not the NDA's and current president Rajnath Singh's visit to a dargah in Lucknow appeared to be manifestations of this approach. But the message seems not to have percolated downwards.

The BJP under Modi has set in a new trend of nominating its prime ministerial candidate even prior to elections, a practice which is contrary to the constitutional provisions and parliamentary precedents. In the entire process, people's faith in the vital institutions of democracy is already eroded. Grabbing power by hook or crook is the only mantra being practiced by almost all political groupings at the expense of the people. The credibility has already been in short supply. Mainstream parties as well as regional satraps are faced with acute existential dilemma. The Congress may survive along with the other progressive parties the electoral debacle but for Modi it is now or never.

— BK