

Prashant Kishore should be thanked for the "PK phenomena"?!

Dr N Bhaskara Rao
Primepost, May 11, 2021

Yes, PK should be thanked for expediting a decaying-course of political parties for some years. With his engagement in seven states and with six different parties in less than a decade, PK has now signalled very effectively Certain vacuum in political leadership and where it is driving should worry us. The vacuum in political leadership stands out from the fact that even "PK be the p m" has now become a call of some already.

Aspiring leaders in power and outside state after state have been craving for a decade to hire the services of Prashant Kishore as polls in their state approach. I realised this four years ago when a senior editor telephoned me in New Delhi from a state capitol whether I could get him the telephone number of Prashant Kishore. With Mamata Benerji and MK Stalin storming the battle now in 2021, the queues for PK would be longer even though he announced quitting that "space" as if he himself realised the implications of the role he was playing and how it is "highly over rated". Political leaders in the country are now looking for I-pack of PK instead of building or consolidating the party with distinct identity, stand, character and a charter. As if The moot question is immaterial. That is whether PK had added to the stature of leaders like Mamata and Stalin as mass leaders with years of ground work. The "magic" PK had shown in AP in 2019 was such that he could not have forgotten the signals?

It is interesting time to see whether "outsourcing" (at a price and with no accountabilities) to a "political strategist", including execution and implementation role, has made any difference. Of course it is already known that in states of Andhra Pradesh and Punjab in 2019 made no difference on five critical factors of an electoral democracy. How about now in 2021? The ADR analysis, just released and widely covered all over, based on what the winners themselves have filed in their own affidavits, brings out that the situation is no better but declined further as compared to the previous election in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

Are the winners now any different? In terms of criminal background, riches they come from and in terms of increase in their wealth, the winners cannot be said as any better in their representative background. Has outsourcing bettered the poll campaign in any respect? Not at all. the poll campaign was even more "bitterly" fought, divisive all across and on many more counts. Nor the campaign was based on any substantial issues of concern to the people. In fact, the campaign was far more expensive, polarising, rhetorical and with full of lures and offer of doles. Can any one say that the polls in any of the states were peaceful or any better on criteria of "free and fairness". Or, are the govts elected even with decisive margins viewed as any "better" in governance. No, the bitterness continues. so also the divides as if vendetta politics have taken roots.

After the 2015 assembly poll, as if in gratitude for the guidance in fighting the election, the Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, president of Janta Dal United nominated Prashant Kishore as Vice President of the party overnight obviously causing heartburn of the party rank and file. In no time there after Prashant Kishore was out from the party position causing an embarrassment to Nitish Kumar's leadership. All that of course has been forgotten.

I wondered In my forthcoming book, Rejuvenating the Republic, where from the next generation leaders come from in India going by the present trends in outsourcing by political parties. For, political leaders are those who inspire, motivate and take the cadre along, give the party certain character with an agenda and prepare the party for the elections including the selection of candidates. But if these functions are outsourced election to election to an outsider, including implementation, with no responsibilities neither to the party cadres nor to the people with stakes, it meant the leader is reduced to a brand name stature. Was that not the situation some what that some parties had gone through?

That is what it is when the strategist, Instead of remaining a back room assistance, becomes the front end player where the leader even tells the cadres that the strategist is going to get the party win the election and help the party select the candidates, negotiate with other potential ones to contest for the party or join the party. And also actively player of the campaign. The leader takes pride telling all that to the public. And it is known that the strategist was one who had come up with party poll strategy, including the slogans, events and even coordinate the matters at booth level and even with news media.

In another book, I described the state of affairs in a state where the PK phenomena continues even after the leader comes into power more than year after where the winner even acknowledged the role of the outsourcer for the victory even when it was obvious that the legislature was neither representative nor has the priorities of the people. and that the state was far more divided than before. And that independent institutes of the state have been reduced as an alley of the leader. The leader need not worry about anything else with a PK around.

Should this trend continue next decade or two, what would be the fate of our electoral democracy and representative govts? Can anyone deny the vacuum and ignore the implications? Certain measures which could retrieve the situation and restore the "We the People" Republic before it becomes hundred at 2050 are discussed in my recent monograph, " Propositions for Our Republic at 100 in 2050". Neither of these require fiddling with the constitution. **(You can ask for a copy).**

There will be a separate article on PK mantras and methodologies.

<https://www.primepost.in/prashant-kishors-phenomenon/>