

Lord Meghnad Desai

# Out of My Mind: A Foregone Conclusion

The BJP is fighting the election like its life depends on the outcome. The Opposition I.N.D.I.A, or whatever remains of it, is behaving as if it is still Nehru-Gandhi days and victory is guaranteed

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India's 2024 General Election promises to be a damp squib. It may as well be declared as won by the BJP with its forecast of two-thirds majority. Having arrived in Delhi over the weekend, it is remarkable to notice how much more seriously the BJP is fighting the elections with Narendra Modi at the forefront, working as if he was fighting for his life. The Opposition I.N.D.I.A, or whatever remains of it, is behaving as if it is still Nehru-Gandhi days and victory is guaranteed.

For one thing, the Congress seems to have forgotten its own history. The Manifesto (of the Congress, not the I.N.D.I.A) begins by stating it has a history of 138 years. Thus, it has not remembered that since 1885 the Party split in 1907 on the Bengal Partition and in 1920 was transformed by Mahatma Gandhi. It then went radical and socialist under Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Bose in 1929, and was split by Indira Gandhi in 1967, and again in 1977 & 1980 when Indira resigned her primary membership of the Congress. The claim is that if the Dynasty is there, so is there the Party.

The story now is that India (the country) is an elected autocracy or an authoritarian democracy. This comes from a party led by a family, which introduced the Emergency, and put the Opposition in jail after passing an amendment that the arrests could not be challenged in a Court of Law. Nothing Modi has done comes remotely close to the damage done by Indira to the country, its democracy, and the Constitution. All that has been forgotten, and now the history is being rewritten.

The BJP, on the other hand, is fighting the election like its life depends on the outcome. The Congress used to be like this in the 1950s. Modi does not take anything for granted and is trotting through the country, speaking to large crowds.

The real giveaway is the world is investing money in the Indian economy. The country may be having an election with 960 million voters, but it is its 250-million rich who attract billions of dollars in investment. India remains a poor country with a rich-enough minority to attract the world, as always.

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