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- ❖ **India-China-Russia Triangle**
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- ❖ **Social Development
& People Participation**
- ❖ **Leadership Concept**
- ❖ **Decline of Congress**



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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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Electoral Slugfest

The ‘Swabhiman Rally’ held on 30 August at Patna’s Gandhi Maidan, which brought the Congress, the JD (U), RJD and SP on a single platform, has seemingly unfolded the contours of the electoral battle in the run-up to the upcoming assembly elections in Bihar. This rally is touted as the first show of strength by the Janata Alliance having spelt out the tone and tenor of the electoral discourse in coming weeks for which the precedent had been set in motion by Prime Minister Modi by challenging the ‘DNA’ of chief minister Nitish Kumar and describing Bihar as a ‘BIMARU’ state some weeks ago.

While alluding to Modi’s ostensible ‘insults’ to ‘Bihari pride’ – from references to Nitish’s ‘DNA’ and Bihar as a ‘BIMARU’ State to the manner in which the special package was announced at a rally — the leaders of the grand Janata Alliance who addressed the rally reportedly made efforts to strike a blow to the BJP’s poll promises by reminding the voters of the absence of delivery on the Prime Minister’s Lok Sabha poll commitments. Over the years, the tone and tenor of the electoral campaign narrative has witnessed a considerable decline with added emphasis on negative campaigning, mudslinging and *ad hominem*. Negative campaigning is broadly construed as an attempt to gain an advantage by referring to negative aspects of an opponent rather than emphasizing one’s own positive attributes or preferred policies. Negative campaigning is characterized by its ubiquitous presence in most marketplaces where ideas are contested.

The period between 2013 and run-up-to-the 2014 Lok Sabha elections witnessed negative campaigning reaching its crescendo. Both leading national parties – Congress and the BJP – were found engaging in mudslinging in their respective styles. In most of his election rallies, The BJP’s prime ministerial candidate’s speeches were filled with words like shehzada and bahrupiya, a direct reference to Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi. The political discourse of electoral narratives continued to hit the bottom of the barrel with no end in sight. Electoral campaigns during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections witnessed politicians of almost all hues having no compunction about painting their opponents with broad, vulgar brushstrokes, and a 24X7 media cycle had only served to highlight every muck-covered jab and counter. Bulk of the content offered by the prime ministerial candidate spoke not of his opponent’s ideology or vision, but descended into simply mudslinging and *ad hominem* attacks.

The campaigning for the February 2015 Delhi assembly elections was characterized by political punch-ups and mudslinging. Tactics became so dirty that the election acquired the social media hashtag: #DelhiFightClub. The tone of the campaign began to degenerate a couple of months ago when the BJP and AAP launched attack ads on radio channels, criticizing each other for flaws in policies and ideologies. The BJP went a step further poking fun at AAP’s Kejriwal for having deserted Delhiites who voted him to power in the last election and saw him quit after 49 days.

During the 2013 elections in Delhi, the campaign was dominated by a David and Goliath-style struggle between the upstart Aam Aadmi Party and the ruling Congress party that had held the capital for a decade and a half. But in February 2015, with Congress sidelined, the contest was a more equal one between Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s BJP and activist-turned-politician Arvind Kejriwal leading AAP. However, what worried most observers was the declining political ethics and resorting to dirty tricks just to grab power. Undoubtedly, many leaders from all sides have routinely resorted to complaints that the language of politicking has taken a turn for the worse; nevertheless, usually when their side is under fire - no party seems to have managed to avoid resorting to mudslinging either. It has been aptly observed that political parties seldom, “want to speak on policies and issues concerning common man. They want a personalised discourse. Their issues are irrelevant to public debate and public concern. They should be more responsible. They have crossed the line of decency.”

Alexis de Tocqueville’s observation about America that there are many men of principle in both parties in America, but there is no party of principle, is equally true of India. Only parties with principles can help in getting rid of this sort of electoral slugfest to usher in healthy political order.

— BK