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Context to the nugget

Vinay speaks about how RSS has been able to create a tight bond amongst its members. He attributes it to the requirement of the RSS pracharaks to be Brahmacharyas (stay single) while their emphasis on family-like values in the organization. He speaks about how this has helped them attract talented people into the organization and avoid the pitfalls of dynastic politics.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Let's dig into the organisation a little bit Vinay. A big chunk of the book is also about the culture that gets created, the culture of teamwork apart from the two individuals who are doing the jugalbandi and in page 297, I quote where you say the genius of the RSS is to create a bond of family among non-family members that is deploying a traditional form of team building to a modern electoral context. Say more about how RSS does it.

Vinay Sitapati (VS): Right, thanks Deepak. First of all, I just want to make it clear to your listeners that this book is not a pro or an anti-RSS or BJP book. So many of you don't like the RSS, all power to you; this book is not going to change your mind and some of you love the RSS and BJP and this book is not going to change your mind. But what it is going to do is answer the question why they win? Why are they successful and that's an empirical fact? So, and the answer of which the RSS uses of modern family like ties to a non-family setting is part of their secret sauce of why they win. So, just I wanted to make it clear to your listeners that you know keep it, that's the spirit in which this conversation is taking place.

DJ: I am glad you said it because this podcast has got nothing to do with politics and I am glad you just said that.

VS: So, it's just asking the empirical question why, you know, what happened to the older idea of India and how is the Narendra Modi idea of India so dominant. Even in a place like Bihar they are winning, they may win now in West Bengal very soon, what, what just happened to the old India. So that's the spirit in which this is taken. Now I as you know I am political scientist and if I asked your listeners and I just said the word Congress, what is the word that comes to your mind, associational word? Most people will say dynasty, right? That's an empirical fact that not just at the top the Nehru Gandhi are a dynasty, Nehru himself was a dynast, his father was a Congress President and he also encouraged dynasty; fact his own daughter became Congress President in his lifetime. So, Indira Gandhi in that sense was a creature of her father. So, this is a fact. But as I began looking at other political parties you find the same issue of dynasty and I realised that nepotism and dynasty aren't Congress problems, they are Indian problems and the reason why the Congress is nepotistic and dynastic is because it's an Indian organisation. If you look at the... look at most doctors in India, a

majority of them will come from family backgrounds. Look at those who join business in India, majority of them that is the Indian nature that the son and daughter will follow the profession of the parents. Now, there are exceptions to that and those exceptions are growing larger and larger in a modern Indian economy, but it still remains more true than not. So, in this context the question was how would the RSS deal with the problem of dynasty and nepotism and to be fair to or to be in defence of dynasty and nepotism the family is a very powerful organisation in India? The parents teach children lots of tricks of the trade that universities, IITs, IIMs never will. I think Mukesh Ambani learnt about business more from his dad, rather than I think he went to Stanford or Wharton, I don't think that taught him business. So, it's a reality, I just don't want to mock it. So, the RSS is in this bind that if they focus on family ties it will become a nepotistic organisation and then talented people from outside and I think I am in a value neutral way I would consider Narendra Modi talented would not be drawn to an organisation where the only people who rise are the children of RSS leaders. On the other hand, you have to take family seriously because it actually is an intuitive bond that Indians understand. So, what's their solution? At one level they glorify family, they call themselves the Sangh Parivar, the family of organisations and the way they behave with each other are like brothers and sisters, they refer to each other that way, they are constantly in each other's house making tea, I show you that. The families of all the RSS fellows know each other; it's that kind of bonding. But if you do this then it will very quickly become the domain of one family. So, what's their solution to have a rule that no pracharak, the pracharaks are about 4,000 to 5,000 permanent functionaries of the RSS, the rule is they cannot marry, they cannot marry. It's remarkable because once you have that rule you don't have children. So, there's no question of RSS becoming a nepotistic organisation.

DJ: They have structurally solved the problem.

VS: It structurally solves the problem and it solves the problem by using a concept in Hinduism which is brahmacharya, which was meant to solve the problem of too many family bonds in India. And one story which is an exception to this rule Deepak tells you how powerful this rule is. There were, you know, as I mentioned earlier the pracharaks or the senior functionaries of the RSS by rule cannot be married because if you are married then you will favour your children and you will destroy the organisation. There are only two exceptions to this, one is a gentleman called MG Vaidya who I interviewed and he is I think now 95 or 96. So, when the rule came about in 1960s, he was already married. So, unless he got divorced, he continued to be married and he continued to rise up. So, that's exception one where you have a senior RSS functionary who also is married and has children. The other is a gentleman called Madhukar Rao Bhagwat who went and told Golwalkar, the long-standing head of the RSS who instituted this rule that look my mother is very old and if I don't marry and I don't have a wife who is going to take care of my mother, so an exception was made. These are the only two functionaries in the RSS who have children and today their children are the number 1 and number 3 of the RSS and I am not kidding. There is Manmohan Vaidya, who is number 3 and Mohan Bhagwat who is number one. They don't have children. So, they are not, they are going to, there are no more Vaidyas and Bhagwats who are going to come in the RSS.

DJ: As they say in mathematics there is a QED, right? This is like theorem proved.

VS: It's 100 percent; like you have literally two exceptions and then they become the number 1 and number 3 of the RSS. So, in that sense my sympathy for the Congress became much more real that look if the Congress wants to reflect India how it can not be a dynastic party and in that sense the RSS is remarkable because it is both conventional, it understands at least certain aspects of Hinduism while being a radical departure from it. That's why they are so successful.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

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End of nugget transcription

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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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